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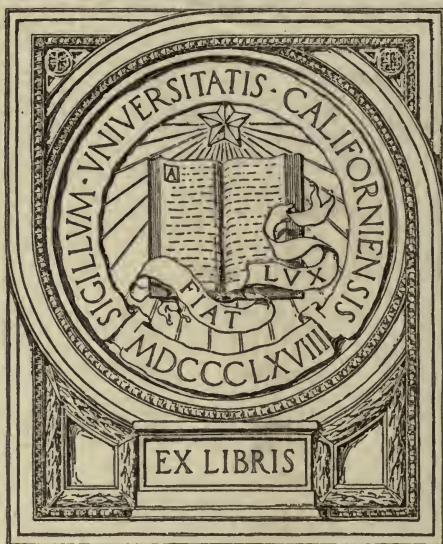
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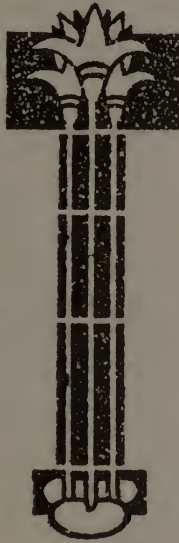
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THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE



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THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

A Study of Present Conditions and Tendencies

WITH NOTES
on the
SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES
and
SOME MILL VILLAGES

By
JOHN IHLDER
" "
MADGE HEADLEY
UDETТА D. BROWN
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1916

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TO THE
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Italy in Providence



On streets whose names tell of alien peoples, frame tenements are being crowded close together, though abundant space is available. Such is Hassan Street—unaccepted, unpaved, unserved, but already bordered by multiple dwellings that shelter Americans of the future—aliens of the present.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

September 9, 1916.

MR. HENRY D. SHARPE,
Chairman, Committee on Housing Survey,
Providence, Rhode Island.

DEAR MR. SHARPE:

Herewith is our report on housing conditions in Providence. While we have found Providence to be more fortunate than many other cities so far as the present situation is concerned, there are tendencies here which, if unchecked, will rapidly change it for the worse. We therefore hope that the people of Providence and their representatives may be persuaded soon to set minimum standards which will prevent the development of conditions that are a menace to the health and well-being of the people and in every way a detriment to the city.

Providence to-day has advantages that other cities would give much to secure. It needs only to use them. Providence has made mistakes in the past from which it is suffering; but they are mistakes that can be remedied. Moreover, they are mistakes that may even be valuable if because of them the people are awakened to the need of careful consideration for the future. In no other city of its size with which I am acquainted is there such opportunity to build well, for Providence still has space both within and without the city. That is the fundamental. Having that, Providence can be made not only one of the most conveniently arranged cities and one of the most wholesome cities, but also one of the pleasantest. The opportunities it presents are such as should arouse the enthusiasm of all who have faith in its future.

Sincerely,

JOHN IHLDER.

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SURVEY

HENRY D. SHARPE, *Chairman*

MISS E. FRANCES O'NEILL

PROF. WILLIAM MACDONALD

EDWARD E. BOHNER

DR. JAY PERKINS

THOMAS B. MAYMON

MRS. DWIGHT K. BARTLETT

ROYAL C. TAFT

MORRIS J. WESSEL

GENERAL COMMITTEE ON IMPROVED HOUSING IN PROVIDENCE

(Inaugurated February 4, 1916, under the auspices of the Providence Chamber of Commerce.)

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Vice-Chairman	-			DR. CHARLES V. CHAPIN
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DR. FRANK L. DAY	Rhode Island Medical Society
D. RUSSELL BROWN	Providence Building Sanitary and Educa- tional Society
MRS. WILLIAM LOEB	Providence Section, Council of Jewish Women

A WORD OF APPRECIATION

OUR work in Providence was unusually pleasant because of the unfailing interest and courtesy of all those with whom it brought us into contact. The number of these is so great that we cannot express our appreciation to them all individually. Some have given considerable time and effort to aid in making the study a success. To Dr. Chapin, who has been a constant source of information and suggestion, and to Mr. Butts, the chief sanitary inspector in the Health Department; to the city engineer, Mr. Bronsdon, and to Mr. Colwell, of his office, who filled in the map of unaccepted and unsewered streets; to the inspector of buildings, Mr. Hopkins, and the members of his staff, who supplied us with a great amount of information; to the Chamber of Commerce, which has generously supported the work; to Col. George H. Shepley, Mr. John R. Freeman and Mr. Paul A. Colwell; to Mr. Francis M. Smith, of whose maps we made such constant use, and to other real-estate men; to members of the committee, the District Nurses and other social workers, whose intimate knowledge of local conditions was invaluable to us, as well as to the officers and members of the Committee on a Housing Survey, we feel a special debt.

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A STUDY OF PRESENT CONDITIONS AND TENDENCIES

There is about Providence an individuality and a charm that tend to divert not only its own people, but the stranger, from consideration of present and future by constantly presenting to them reminders of a past rich in history and tradition. Memories of the heroism of colony days, of the spirit that led men and women to endure privation for conscience' sake are kept alive by such street names as Benevolent, Benefit, Hope; the romance of our old sea-faring days, when buccaneering was a profession in which the most respectable engaged, is recalled by the little streets leading down to the old wharves, Doubloon, Sovereign, Guilder. And the power of tradition over those who still control the destinies of the city is shown by the transition through Bullion, Gold, Silver and Coin to Dollar and Dime streets. But if there is any significance in these names as casting some light upon the times that are past, is there not equal significance in street names now appearing in the more recently built sections of the city—Angelo, Raphael, Aventine, Monticello, Hassan?

As with its street names, so with its dwellings, Providence points back to the past and forward to the future. And what cause for wonder is there if one looks backward oftener and longer than he looks forward? Of the past there survives the best. It gives an impression of a worthier, nobler time than the present. The struggles of the past are ended. Those who look back upon them represent the victors. They feel the comfort, the sense of security and well-being of those who have won their fight. The struggles of the future, already begun, though waged in the names of new causes, are for the same prize, the right to inherit and rule the land, to mold its institutions and make its contribution to the world. The issue of these new struggles is in doubt. Contemplation of them gives little comfort, little sense of security and well-being. Their appeal is to those who retain the old zest for fighting and enduring, who have faith that however well we have done in the past we shall and will do better in the future.

So Providence takes a legitimate pride in its old dwellings, which typify, as nothing else can do, the story of its past; the houses of its sea-captains along South Main Street—many now converted to other uses or occupied by people of whose ancestors the captains told strange yarns on their return from long voyages; the more impressive mansions on Benefit and Power and other streets back on the hill, among them some of the most beautiful examples of our Colonial and

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

early Republican home-building. To one who would study the history of the dwelling-house in America no city offers such opportunity as does Providence.

What wonder then, with these reminders constantly before them, if the American born of American ancestry find pleasure in recalling the past? And it is more than reminders that the past has given to the present. Generations of wealth and culture have gone to produce the atmosphere that makes so large a part of Providence charm. It is not street names and old houses, it is what those names and houses symbolize; it is not alone present wealth and education, it is past wealth and education, with their generations' long effect upon standards of living, standards of conduct and of thought, that make the Providence of first impressions.

So Providence owes much to the past, and it acknowledges the debt. But Providence also owes a debt to the future. Having received, it must also give. And to be worth having its gift must be not merely of its possessions, but of itself. In that lies the value of the gift it has received. Steadfast courage, willingness to sacrifice for an ideal, to work despite discouragement, is the real legacy from the past and that is the only legacy which will count for the future.

Of its debt to the future Providence has begun to make acknowledgment. Like every American city it provides schools for the children of those whom its industries have called. It has organizations whose purpose is to relieve the poor and the sick and put them upon their feet again. It gives some aid to the bewildered immigrant. And yet one questions how many share the sense of obligation, how much of the debt is paid in a spirit of detachment, because other cities are doing it; how much is done because of a realization that such payment is vital and that according as it includes understanding and sympathy as well as money, depends how the future of Providence will compare with its past, how the present generation will be judged by its successors.

Our interest in reminders of the past is because they speak to us of the men and women of the past. Quaint names of streets appeal, not because of their unfamiliar sound to modern ears, but because they tell of ideals which were part of men's lives; dignified and beautiful dwellings arouse our enthusiasm not merely because of their dignity and beauty, but because they symbolize the spirit of their builders. These men and women not only conquered a wilderness but they set and, in spite of temptations, kept high standards for themselves and their community.

Our interest in the symbols of present and future has the same basis, a vital concern in the ideals and the spirit of the present and future generations. Doubloon and Bullion speak of desire for wealth achieved through adventure and daring; Dollar and Dime speak of desire for wealth achieved through industry and thrift. Adventure pursued too far would become mere lawlessness. The

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

Rhode Island of the past sometimes approached the border line, but it saved itself. Thrift pursued too far becomes mere short-sighted miserliness. Will Providence save itself from this? Benevolent, Benefit, Hope recall the successful effort to meet the great issue which confronted men in the days of their christening. Will Angelo, Raphael, Hassan remind our successors of achievement or failure in our effort to make a new people?

A British subject once called America the melting-pot. The phrase caught our fancy. But it describes aspirations rather than performance. Garibaldi, an exile in America, declared it no land for the patriots of other lands because it draws them so irresistibly that they forget the country of their birth. Yet Garibaldi, a naturalized American citizen, returned to Italy to lead his Thousand. Old loyalties, old habits of thought, old standards of living are not thrown overboard during an ocean voyage, nor during a lifetime. Given the continuance of an old-world environment they may continue to the third and fourth generation.

The ingredients for the melting-pot are present in Providence and in Rhode Island in greater proportion than in most of our cities and states. Under every classification in the Federal Census reports of the foreign born, are residents of Providence. Even Mexico and India are represented. Are they fusing, are they becoming Americans? Or are they becoming compact little communities insulated from American influences by group interests, by old-world habits of thought and standards of living?

How deep is the concern which the American of American ancestry feels in the question? His city is being remade under his eyes. Control of its destiny is passing from him. Yet is he not as much absorbed as these new comers in traditions of a past which has as little reality to them as have theirs to him? Here are stories not only of individuals, but of a city and a state in the making. Here are humor and pathos and devastating sorrow. Here are higher barriers than those raised by European ranks and castes. Here is the joy of achievement. Here is the hopeless misery of families divided between acceptance of the new and devotion to the old. Here is the moral wreck that follows loss of old standards without acquirement of new. Here are aspiration and loneliness, desire for the future, longing for the past. Yet what of all this has penetrated to the consciousness of the native born? How has it enlightened his understanding, quickened his sympathy, educated him for the task of making these peoples his fellow countrymen? At the Art Exhibition last winter there was no sign. Scenes from foreign cities, landscapes and sea-scapes, a picture of old whaling ships, but no hint that around the corner is a story that must be interpreted if Providence is to solve its problem.

Recently we have become awakened to the necessity for preparedness. Already we have passed through the stage when we

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thought that more ships and rifles and a larger army were our greatest need. Already we realize that to mobilize our industries is but the beginning of the task. Back of all this, far more important than all this, is a homogeneous people, a people with a single allegiance. And such a people we can get only by turning their thoughts from the past to the future, from the many lands of their fathers to the one great land of their children.

But it is not enough that we should be one people; we must also be a strong and virile people. The founders of Providence came into an environment that killed the weak but strengthened the strong. They lived in the open, they had space in which to grow and develop. Times have changed. The founders fought and conquered nature. We must fight and conquer ourselves. The newcomers to Providence find an environment perhaps more kindly to the weak, but less kindly to the strong. They live less in the open, constantly they are being more cramped. The founders and their children set standards of living which we accept as American. The newcomers have lower standards. Are we raising these standards or are ours sinking toward their level? And what will be the results in the future?

The answer to the second question is given by the armies of Europe. When the industrial age began in Germany people crowded into cities unprepared to receive them. The result quickly became evident to eyes which noted the deterioration of conscripts from the industrial centers. So Germany began to wipe out its slums. The future soldier must be born and bred in a wholesome dwelling. England, despite the warnings of statesmen and reformers, awoke only when the Boer War demanded recruits from its industrial cities. In Manchester alone, of 11,000 applicants only 3,000 could be accepted. A parliamentary commission found that the reasons for the physical deterioration of England's manhood were poor food and overcrowding in unsanitary dwellings. Since then the work of clearing slum areas has been pressed with vigor, the garden-city movement has been started and spread across the kingdom. But fourteen years are too short a time in which to rear a new and better generation. When the real histories of the present war are written we shall know more of the price England has paid for bad housing.

And what of America? Would it make a better showing in 1916 than England did in 1900? Our present mobilization along the Mexican border gives no answer, for the militia, as drafted for service, is a self-selected group of the more fit. Analogous to the English figures are those of the United States Marine Corps recruiting stations for 1915. Of the 1,110 applicants in Boston only 107 were accepted; of 9,950 applicants in New York only 234 were accepted; of 2,580 applicants in Cleveland only 209 were accepted; of 3,539 applicants in Chicago only 414 were accepted; of 3,011 applicants in San Francisco only 204 were accepted. Of 39,122

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

applicants throughout the country only 4,051 were accepted. This is a worse showing than that of Manchester. Here, as there, the applicants were a self-selected group, the obviously unfit not presenting themselves. Somewhat balancing this group is that of the steadily employed, who probably include a larger proportion of the physically fit, but who are less likely to seek admission to the army in time of peace. Yet the showing is one to cause us disquietude.

The preparedness advocates tell us we must hasten lest we be caught unprepared, for it takes three years to build a battleship. Those who believe in a more thorough preparedness, one which will fit us for peace as well as war, ask too that there be no delay. For it takes twenty-one years to rear a man.

I

The Growth and Development of the City

There can be few more fascinating studies for those who are interested in the life about them than a study of the growth and the development of their city. For, like the individual, a city begins with certain characteristics, and as it grows, as it encounters outside influences, assumes or shirks responsibilities, develops or fails to develop foresight and vision, so does its character change for better or for worse.

STRONGLY MARKED INDIVIDUALITY

From this point of view the growth and development of Providence are unusually interesting. Founded by a man whose purpose was to provide a refuge for those who were persecuted in the name of religion, it began as a community of strongly marked individualities. Uniformity, even co-operation, was foreign to the natures of those who came to the plantations that they might take part in Roger Williams' "lively experiment" by living each according to his own light while permitting his neighbor to do the same. From that time to this, strongly marked individuality has been a conspicuous characteristic of Providence people and their work. In their housing this characteristic is so conspicuous that it is almost impossible to make generalizations, for important exceptions at once appear.

Even in social and civic work, in the studies that have been made of the community, there seems to be an unusually strong tendency to consider each as complete in itself. Conscious efforts have been made to overcome this tendency by calling together groups of people interested in different phases of the community problem, which, after all, is one great problem, no matter how many phases it may present. Yet the old spirit persists and is evident even in the City Planning Commission's studies, in which street layouts have been determined without much consideration for such related problems as those of lot sizes and the varying traffic needs of different neighborhoods. For the distance between streets determines the depths of lots and these influence the size and type of dwelling; while the narrow roadway, twenty feet or even less, adequate for private vehicles and an occasional delivery wagon, materially reduces the burden upon home owners of small means. Yet these city planning studies are indicative of a great advance in community feeling, as is impressively evident when one studies the street and sewer map of the present city.

THE GROWTH OF THE CITY

Like our other cities Providence has grown from small beginnings without forethought. It has added sub-division to sub-division as if each were to be the last. It has surrounded and more or less successfully absorbed communities once lying far outside its borders. It has extended not only its borders, but its built-up area until it touches that of another large city, with which it has had to arrange a *modus vivendi* for the disposal of community wastes. In all this it has been fortunate, not because of foresight, but because topography has compelled the laying out of its chief arteries so that, roughly, they conform to what scientific planning would have decreed. Again, in the reservation of public open spaces topography has compelled past generations to build a better city than they would, since, had it not been for coves and ponds and hills, the filling and grading of which were beyond its means, Providence would be to-day without some of its chief glories. So, thanks to that Providence after which it is named, the city has come through the period of haphazard growth far more fortunately than have many of its rivals.

TYPES OF HOUSES

In another way Providence has been fortunate. Its growth has been steady and fairly regular. Except for the decade from 1840 to 1850, when it nearly doubled in population, and that from 1870 to 1880, when it grew from 68,904 to 104,857 (this growth being due in part to annexation), there has been no sudden influx of the kind that strains all civic and social machinery and lowers standards of living. Just what permanent effect these two "booms" may have had it is difficult now to determine. Perhaps from the first comes the general acceptance of the two-family house, whose introduction no one remembers. Perhaps from the second comes the three-decker. For though there are two-family houses apparently built more than a century ago, still in the early days each family had a house to itself. But the "booms" were of short duration, so Providence now is fairly well supplied with dwellings, certainly more nearly adequately supplied than most prosperous cities of its size. And, what is even more important, the great majority of these dwellings have adequate open spaces around them. Except in a few comparatively small districts, Providence has not yet developed the fundamental housing evil, land overcrowding.

THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

Historians of Providence divide its past into three epochs, agricultural, commercial, industrial. And as it is third and latest, one gets the impression that the industrial epoch is of comparatively recent origin. Yet it had been long developing when the commercial era ended with the return of the last East Indiaman, in 1841; for it was in 1790 that Moses Brown induced Samuel Slater to come to Providence instead of Philadelphia and founded at Pawtucket the cotton

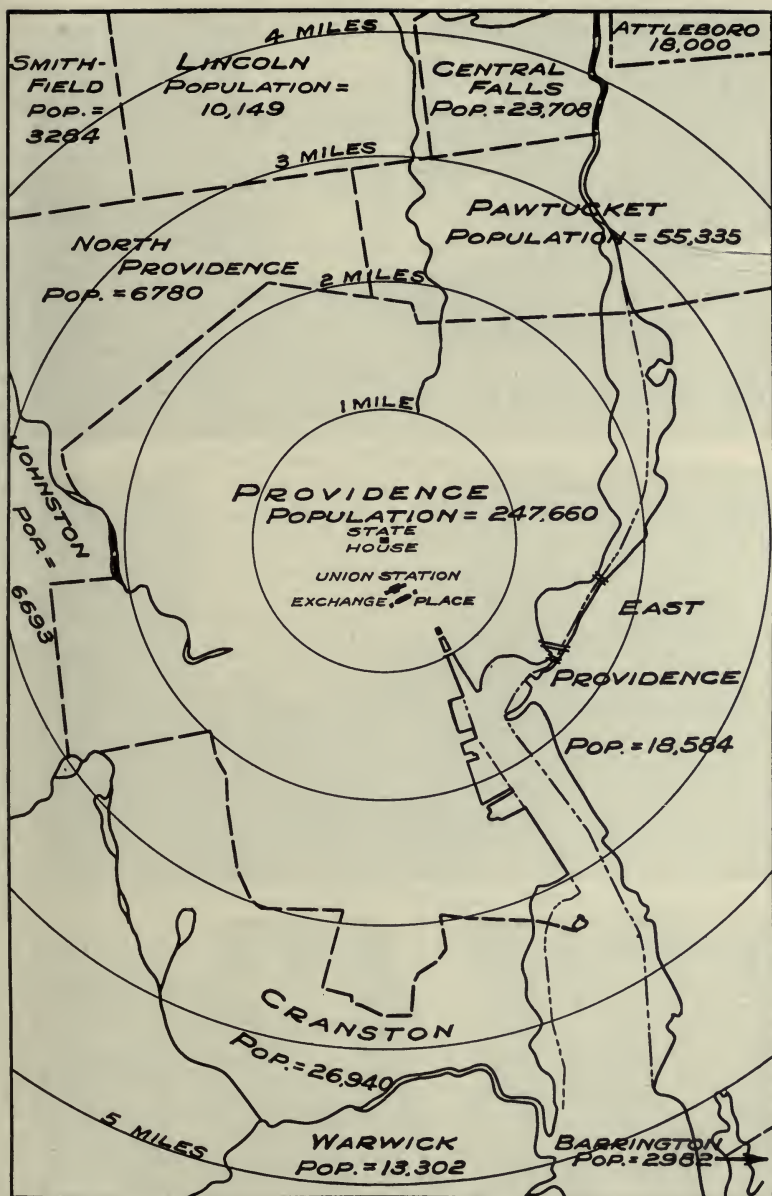
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mill of Almy, Brown and Slater. So while one activity declined, another grew. And as it grew it became diversified. The woolen industry was attracted by Rhode Island water-power. And after the manufacture of woollens came those of jewelry, of machinery, of many other articles. For us the important fact is that one epoch merged into the other so that the city grew steadily in numbers and in wealth without those violent transitions that wreak havoc.

With the city grew all the surrounding district. What the bay and harbor had been in earlier days, the streams that flow into the bay became in the new age. Because of its water-power Pawtucket was chosen as the site for the first cotton mill. By 1830 it had a population of 1,439. In 1910 it had a population of 51,622, and to-day one estimated at 55,335. Meanwhile the adjoining city of Central Falls has grown until it contains 24,000 people, and to the south and east have developed the thriving communities of Cranston and East Providence. Because of their water-powers the Blackstone, the Woonasquatucket and the Pawtuxet valleys became the series of mill villages that now form an important part of the metropolitan district and that sooner or later must all be considered in any plans for the metropolis. Some of these villages, like Olneyville, Merino and Manton, are already within the city's corporate limits. Others, like Knightsville and Phillipsdale, are parts of adjoining corporations. With all of them, as already with Cranston in regard to water supply and Pawtucket in regard to sewage disposal, some means must be found of supplying those public services that no civilized community can exist without, and that in densely populated areas must be supplied by one system.

THE PEOPLES OF PROVIDENCE

So far the problems of the future Providence do not differ in kind from those of old-world cities which are going through a like evolution. But the populations of the old-world cities are fairly homogeneous, while that of Providence is in marked degree heterogeneous. Wave after wave of aliens has peacefully invaded the city and made parts of it their own. Dr. William Kirk quotes an English surgeon who had visited America, as writing in 1817 that the residents of Providence are native Americans. In the earlier years of the industrial era the operatives in the mills were native Americans. Soon, however, English immigrants began to come, some are still coming, and there are districts in Providence largely peopled by the English born and their children, who number more than 20,000. The Irish immigration probably began to assume large proportions about the middle of the nineteenth century, when the great famine started that migration which nearly emptied the island of its people into the slums of England and the cities of America. To-day there are almost 50,000 people of Irish blood in Providence, of whom approximately



THE REAL PROVIDENCE

The map shows 54 square miles of the Metropolitan District, or less than the area of St. Paul, Denver, or Portland, Ore., which are erroneously regarded as being in the "Providence Class." The population here, however, is double that of either of those places. The "Metropolitan Park District of Providence," as defined by the General Assembly, contains 437,844 people. The "Metropolitan District of Providence," as defined by the U. S. Government, contains 529,630.—From the Providence Magazine, March, 1916.



Glimpses of Three Districts. 1, Italian. 2, Jewish. 3, American Negro.

THE GROWTH OF THE CITY

one third are foreign born. Scotland, too, has contributed its quota, though it is little more than a fourth that of England.

These English-speaking peoples made a vivid impression when they first arrived, and for years the Irish, with their more distinct characteristics and their lower standards of living, formed a community apart. But even with them there was no barrier of a foreign tongue, and when more exotic peoples began to arrive, the Irish, pushed from behind out of the poorest paid places, robbed of their strangeness by others still more strange, began to break up their colonies and mingle with the native born. Yet there are in Providence to-day large fragments of the Irish settlements in what have now become known as Polish and Portuguese neighborhoods. The Germans never came in any considerable numbers, though the census takers of 1910 found 5,244 persons of German blood, nearly one half of whom were foreign born. Then came the French Canadians, the white Portuguese, the Italians, the Poles, the Russian and Polish Jews, the Scandinavians, the black Portuguese, the Armenians, and other peoples, many of whom live in compact groups, in which is fostered an old-world race consciousness that will prolong indefinitely the process of Americanization.

The increasing difficulties in the way of this process is indicated by census figures, which show that in 1900 there were, excluding English-Canadians, British and Irish, only 21,146 foreign born in the city's population of 175,598, and of these 9,630 came from northern Europe. We have been accustomed to congratulate ourselves upon such a showing, believing that these northern peoples are easily assimilated. Comparatively easily assimilated they are. Providence is nothing like as conscious of its 5,244 Germans and 6,677 Scandinavians, who live according to American standards, as it is of its 407 black Portuguese, who pack the old lodging houses near Fox Point. But we have evidence that our optimism may have been too easy-going. Take even the largest group of those who speak English.

The census of 1910 records 46,455 people of Irish blood, 15,798 foreign born and—more significant—23,283 native born, both of whose parents were Irish born. So out of this great number there are only 7,374 whose blood may contain another strain. For it is but recently that the Irish colonies have begun to disintegrate, and so long as a foreign group lives as a group and maintains different, especially lower, standards, it is not assimilated. With the English and the Scotch the situation is, as might be expected, much more encouraging, for of both nearly half the native-born children have one native-born parent. With the English Canadians it is best of all, for of their native-born children 2,417 have one native-born parent, while of only 1,397 children are both parents of foreign birth. In this list should be included the 5,750 native born among whom the census tabulators have hidden the number whose foreign-born parents came

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

from different countries, for they at least can have no single allegiance except to America.

THE MORE RECENT IMMIGRANTS

If there was ground for optimism in the census returns of 1900, it is decreased by those of 1910. For since 1900 the emphasis has been changed. Though Providence still draws immigrants from the earlier sources, it is now drawing more heavily from southern and eastern Europe and even from Asia. In 1900 there were only 6,256 Italian born in Providence; in 1910 there were 17,305, and of 9,844 native-born children both parents of all except 386 were Italian born. Here is as yet no intermixture. And so long as their colonies remain, the Italians, like the Irish, may be expected to marry among themselves. As with the Italians so with the other stocks from which we are now drawing so largely, they live and marry among themselves. With some of them it is esteemed a virtue to do as much trading as possible among themselves. They form little communities which consciously aim to be as self-sufficient as possible. As their numbers grow so does their ability to form these self-contained alien communities in the midst of an American community.

THE AMERICAN NEGROES OF PROVIDENCE

No description of the race colonies of Providence would be complete without mention of the American negroes who, according to the census of 1910, numbered 5,316 souls. Except for some of the women who have made their homes with the Bravas near Fox Point, they have little to do with the Portuguese negroes, but live in their own settlements. These, usually small groups of houses, are scattered through the city. Though nearly one third of the negro population lives in the first ward, it has no well-defined district there. The largest colony is in the seventh ward, between Cranston Street and Elmwood Avenue, where some 300 families occupy the houses along a series of narrow streets, scarcely more than alleys.

Though the American negroes in Providence are too few to contribute much to its housing or other social problems, they have a stronger moral claim upon the community than have the aliens who now are swarming in. Among them will be found a patriotism as strong as that of the white native born, and yet, a people apart, poor and nearly helpless, they are finding it more and more difficult even to earn a livelihood. And those among them who by force of character and ability have risen in the economic scale, find it almost impossible to secure for their families such homes as they desire. The negroes of Providence could do little injury to the community if they would. But the community can do itself great moral harm by neglecting its responsibility for them.

II

Tendencies in Building

Providence congratulates itself, and rightly, upon having no such slums as have some of the larger cities. It believes that the detached type of house prevalent here is a better type than the long monotonous rows of Philadelphia and Baltimore. It even argues that the frame three-decker is superior to these solid blocks of brick one-family houses. Admittedly the three-decker has advantages, but so has the little row house, and Providence might be surprised to hear the comments of Philadelphians and Baltimoreans upon its multiple-dwellings.

But though the Providence of to-day may be able to compare its housing with that of certain other cities and feel pleased at the showing, it should consider tendencies as well as present conditions. It is too early yet to show by a multitude of "horrible" examples the effect that the alien colonies are having and will have upon local housing, but there are more than enough such examples to show what the tendency is. The best time to have checked this tendency was before it began. But such foresight could scarcely be expected, and the past is past. The best time remaining is the present. Already there are vested interests which will oppose any effort to set standards that will deprive them of expected profits from sweating the land and piling families up in human warehouses. But with every year that passes these interests will grow stronger, until the time comes, as it has come in other cities, when, as a mere matter of self-preservation, the community must act, despite opposition. Then, however, it will be necessary, as it has been in New York, to compromise on standards far below those which should be set and which now can be set.

PLACING THE RESPONSIBILITY

It is easy to place the responsibility for deterioration in housing upon our foreign elements. In some measure this may be justified, but only on the score that it is in accord with public policy for the native born to leave the alien to work out his own salvation. There are serious defects in this policy, however, which render it scarcely tenable. The native born build and own houses inhabited by the immigrant. These houses set a standard which the new comer naturally accepts as American. What if the Pole, the Italian, the Portuguese, find these dwellings superior in some respects to those from which they came? Will it satisfy Providence that its foreign quarters are somewhat better than the slums of Lisbon and Naples; that its sanitation

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

is somewhat superior to that of the villages of Russian Poland? What if some of these peoples are not accustomed to American ideas of cleanliness, and continue here old habits of overcrowding and slovenliness? Can we afford to shrug our shoulders and leave them to their own devices?

But, as a matter of fact, we do not leave them to their own devices. Why do French Canadians, Italians and Poles push Americans, English, Irish out of the unskilled trades? Have we no profit-making part in that? How do they come to live in houses unsanitary, dilapidated, out of repair? Have we no profit-making part in that? If there were no such houses they would not be lived in. If Providence permitted no privies within its borders they would not be used. And to-day the native born of American ancestry still have power to make the laws and set the standards for their city.

BUYERS AND BUILDERS

The earlier comers among our alien groups found Providence a city of small houses and they accepted what they found. The largest among these earlier groups is not notable for its thrift. It has left little impression upon the city's building. Some of the later comers are of a different character. The white Portuguese are home buyers. So far they have done comparatively little building, being content with what they find, and in many instances superseding the Irish, who once had a considerable colony in the India Point district. The black Portuguese, or Bravas, are of another stamp. They seldom bring their families, but come and go, and while here live where and how they can live cheapest. Some of the old dwellings near Fox Point now used as Brava lodging houses yield incomes entirely out of proportion to the value of the buildings. The Poles, too, are thrifty, but like the white Portuguese they incline to take what they find instead of building. They, too, are often successors to the Irish. The Jews also are house buyers. Many of the old houses along North Main Street now have Jewish owners. And in addition to buying, the Jews build.

THE ITALIAN INFLUENCE

But pre-eminent among the newer comers, in their influence upon Providence housing, are the Italians. Both because of their numbers and because among them thrift and the desire to own real estate are developed to such a degree that these virtues become obscured, the Italians are an element worthy of serious study by those who are interested in the future of the city.

In many ways the Italian immigrant measures up to what we believe is requisite in good citizenship. Comparing, from the American point of view, his virtues with his vices, the former far outweigh



A Street of Three-Deckers



Goddard Street, one of the Jewish Districts

TENDENCIES IN BUILDING

the latter. And even some of what we might call his vices are but virtues pushed to excess, though contrariwise, some qualities which we are wont to laud have also crossed the border line. His clannishness, his fondness for living among his own people, which increases so greatly the difficulty of Americanization, is but an expression of the same feeling that makes the Italian family the kind upon which a city and a nation can be built. His quick temper, like his demonstrativeness, his love of color and gaiety, may prove a valuable element when mixed with the slower and more subdued temperaments of the north in the future American. His industry and ambition surely merit American approbation, and though they may call for a check in the form of child-labor legislation, his love for his children will quickly lessen this danger as he rises in the economic and social scale. But those two great virtues of his, of which one hears constantly from Americans with whom he has financial dealings, his thrift and his desire to own real estate, are of more lasting concern.

Of course these qualities, like his others, will be modified in the future when the Italian in America has lost his identity. But they are of greater concern not only to the present but the future, because they are now finding expression in ways which will be permanent. We are told by his spokesmen that he lives in congested neighborhoods, in overcrowded dwellings, not because he desires to do so, but because he must. The poor take what they can get, and the great majority of Italians in Providence are poor. Given his choice, the Italian would live in a cottage surrounded by a garden. But the Italian is not poorer than the Pole and Portuguese, who seem to be under no such compelling necessity to pack their dwellings together, however much the former may overcrowd his dwelling within doors. It is excessive thrift that has made the Federal Hill district what it is. And when this excessive thrift passes, as it probably will in the course of two or three generations, it will leave Providence permanently an overcrowded tenement-house city. That is, it will unless Providence now foresees the danger and prevents it.

FOLLOWING AMERICAN PRECEDENTS

For the Italian, like the Jew, is not only a buyer but a builder. And however unlike the Jew he may be in his love for gardens and open spaces, he is like him in that prospect of profit will lead him to subordinate other cravings and build as high and as deep as the law allows. Here again comes the responsibility of the native born of American ancestry. It was they who erected the first three-deckers. It was they who said what is permissible and what is not when they enacted the Providence building code. The Italian and the Jewish builders are but following American precedents—and going a little further, are but doing what Americans have said is proper, when they build double three-deckers and large brick tenement houses, erect

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dwelling on the rear of lots, open windows within three feet of another dwelling and in so doing incidentally close most of the windows in that other dwelling. What they are doing Americans have done before them and said it was good. The difference is they are doing more of it, so much more of it that we cannot avoid seeing the results, and we see that they are bad.

Already the Americans are beginning to reap what they have sown. Such land overcrowding as now obtains in the Atwells Avenue district on Federal Hill increases revenues, but it lowers standards. Paradoxically, it lowers property values. The Italian tenements are creeping rapidly along the cross streets toward Broadway. And before them go consternation and depreciation. One of the most beautiful and dignified streets in the city seems doomed. This is not because a new people are coming in. If the new people would live as did the old, the tragedy would be one of individuals, rather than one of the community; of the present only, rather than of the present and the future. But the new people will not live as do the old. What they will do to Broadway is foreshadowed by what they are doing in such undeveloped areas as that near Silver Lake. Drawn by their craving for the open, for the sun and the garden, they buy a little tract of land and erect a small house. But, with more forethought than the native American, they build that small house on foundations strong enough to bear two or three additional stories against the time when they can rent to newer comers and so thriftily add to their income. Here and there over this open country the three-decker has already appeared, heralds of a day when Silver Lake will duplicate Federal Hill.

THE PROGRESS OF THE INVASION

So far the native Americans have watched these foreign invasions as if they were helpless. They surrendered the old houses on Main Street to Portuguese, Jews and Armenians with comparatively little regret, for these are too far down town for comfort in a noisy industrial city. But they are surrendering their homes on Broadway and other pleasant streets, not because they wish, but because undesirable buildings are changing the character of the neighborhood. To-day they have one stronghold, on the East Side about the university. There are other delightful districts scattered about the city, but in none of them is there any sense of security. Even on the hill there is not security. Though the Portuguese to the south threaten no serious advance, the Jews along North Main Street are climbing the steep hillside and there are other significant changes. Coincident with the building of pleasant homes along Blackstone Boulevard, cheap three-deckers are being erected further north. And in the very heart of the district apartment houses are appearing. So it is being attacked both from within and from the rear.

TENDENCIES IN BUILDING

Yet means of defense are available and have been used by other cities. As long ago as 1878 Providence made its first attempt to set standards by enacting a building code. This was in the second of the two decades during which the city experienced an unusually rapid growth and, if one may reason from analogies, the code was adopted at that time because abuses made it necessary. That code, revised in 1909 and with some minor amendments, is still in force. Now a new crisis has come. Providence to-day has considerably more than twice the population it had in 1878. To-day it is necessary to guard against abuses then unpracticed because unprofitable.

RESTRICTION NOT ENOUGH

But it is not on restriction alone that Providence can depend to safeguard its homes. While setting standards for its builders it must itself supply certain public services. Because of its radiating streets and its traction system the city has been enabled to spread out. Probably to this more than to any other one factor—aside from its regular growth—is due the small amount of land overcrowding, except in the Italian and Jewish districts. But the city has not taken advantage of this opportunity by planning in advance. So there are in all directions streets that never have been accepted because when the authorities came to consider them—long after they had been bordered by dwellings—they could be brought up to requirements only at an expense which the present owners are loath to assume. Even in the older and most crowded areas, even in the Atwells Avenue section of Federal Hill, there are many of these unaccepted streets. As an unaccepted street usually means not only an unpaved street, but also an unsewered street, it needs no argument to prove that lack of foresight in this instance at least has had serious consequences.

To repair the results of past neglect is not as easy nor as cheap as to have prevented them. And especially is this true when the people most directly concerned are much less eager to secure the improvement than they are to avoid paying for it. This problem of the unaccepted streets, however, is a community problem, not one to be settled by owners of abutting property alone. How serious it is, how widespread, is indicated by a map submitted to the committee, which presents a graphic picture of a trilogy in which Providence has small cause for pride: unaccepted streets, unsewered streets and privies. This is a situation calling for a definite municipal policy that will result in the paving and sewerage of all streets in built-up sections of the city, and the proper planning of new sub-divisions so that future streets may be made acceptable at a minimum cost.

Surely a city that has done as well as Providence has with its water supply can do equally well with its waste disposal. One is scarcely more important than the other. Yet Providence not only supplies water to practically every dwelling, but even supplies the 26,000 people in the neighboring city of Cranston as well.

III

The Use of the Land

Providence is an unusually spacious city. Its great good fortune in this respect is probably due chiefly to the steadiness of its growth, for it is during sharp spasms of development that old standards are surrendered and the people accept, on the plea of temporary necessity, new and lower standards that soon become permanent. In the commercial era Providence had front yards before its houses, gardens and orchards behind. The transition to the industrial era came so gradually, the character and standards of the people changed so slowly, that the old generous tradition persisted. Its effects are evident not only in the older districts, where very large lots still exist, but in the number of vacant lots in every part of the city and in the standard size, 40 or 50 feet by 80 to 100 feet, adopted by many of the real-estate operators in laying out new sub-divisions. Providence does not reconcile itself to cramped spaces, either public or private.

Yet, as said before, it is unsafe to generalize for Providence. Large lots in the older districts are being filled with buildings; even in the newest sub-divisions the rule is subject to many exceptions, while in those of a few years ago there are occasional plats, as along Goddard, Lydia and Bernon streets, where the lots are so shallow that rear yards are inadequate even when the houses are flush with the street line. In the older districts lots are of all sizes and shapes. An illustration is afforded by the block along Fountain Street, between Cargill and Battey, a block pierced by three blind alleys: Penelope Court, Belknap and West streets. Some of the lots are very large, like that known as Furlong Court, and on each of these there may be several buildings, placed most irregularly. Adding to the confusion is the difficulty of determining just where the lot lines run. So it has proved impracticable to measure distances between buildings and lot line in order to determine whether adequate space has been left for light and air.

USE OF LARGE LOTS

But here again Providence has been fortunate. Because of its regular growth and its means of transit, land owners are only now beginning to find it profitable to erect dwellings containing dark or gloomy rooms. The large lots in old districts have been utilized in many ingenious ways; there are rear buildings, occasionally three and four deep, as in the courts off Chaffee Street. There are buildings staggered so that the rear dwelling has an outlook to the street through

THE USE OF THE LAND

the side yard of the street dwelling. Sometimes when the lot is very wide there are two street dwellings with one in the rear whose ends overlap the sides of those in front of it, but not enough to cover their rear windows nor to permit them to cover its front windows. The little court so formed is used in common by the families occupying all three houses.

In the six districts* studied intensively houses were placed upon their lots as follows:

	Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totals
	A	B	A	B	C					
Front	44	45	32	38	28	77	109	88	79	540
Rear										
Not Staggered	6	10	6	8	6	17	10	2	20	85
Staggered . . .	4	3	2	0	2	4	2	0	2	19
Totals	54	58	40	46	36	98	121	90	101	644

The ample size of most Providence lots has made possible heretofore such ingenious groupings without cutting off light and air. For if one owner built too near his lot line, his neighbor simply erected his house a little farther away. But though Providence is still remarkable for the proportion of vacant lots in every part of the city and for the open spaces surrounding its dwellings, the time has come when dependence can no longer be placed upon a generous tradition or upon the desire of the tenant for light and airy rooms. Street frontages are becoming too valuable to be given up to wide side yards, and even on the rears of lots new and larger dwellings are being erected which not only overfill their own land, but block the windows of neighboring houses.

AN INSTANCE OF LAND OVERCROWDING

A striking instance of this change is afforded by the new three-story brick tenement house on the rear of an Atwells Avenue lot. Years ago the neighboring owner built a frame tenement house which comes to within 14 to 18 inches of the lot line. The light and air for its side windows came from the rear yard of the adjoining lot. Now the owner of that rear yard has filled it up, building flush with his side line, and complying with the law by placing windows for bedrooms, water closets and pantries in two little courts. So he has darkened the rooms on one side of the old dwelling and built for himself a house that would not have been permitted had the framers of the building code foreseen his plans. They decreed that no window shall be less than three feet from an adjoining lot line nor less than ten feet from another building on the same premises. One of his courts is 4' 8" deep by 6' 8" wide. The other is 3' deep by

* These six districts are outlined on the maps accompanying a brief description in the Appendix.

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6' 4" wide. Unless the windows in the court walls at right angle to the lot line are held to come within the proscribed distance, he has complied with the letter of the law.

Such a building as this should be prohibited, not only in Providence, but in any city. Especially should it be prohibited in Providence, where there is no great pressure of population and where the traditional large open spaces are so frequently used in ways that enhance the well-being of the community.

THE YARDS OF PROVIDENCE

The yards of Providence are as impossible to describe by a general statement as are other phases of its housing. They range from bare earth, packed hard by many feet, the only play space of scores of children whose homes are in surrounding tenements, to the beautiful lawns and gardens of East Side mansions. The condition in which some are kept has aroused the indignation of the Clean Up Committee. But to one who knows the handicaps imposed by crowded living and by common use of premises, there is cause for greatest encouragement. Under the most adverse conditions, in corners sheltered from trampling feet by fences made of odds and ends, are little gardens which go far to redeem the dingiest sections of the city. If the Clean Up Committee would set its mark beyond a negative absence of rubbish and award its favor to those who do something positive with their yards it would accomplish its present purpose incidentally to accomplishing one much greater. For those who grow flowers and vegetables will not abide litter.

In this matter of gardens there are wide variations between the different nationalities. Of the Brava men, birds of passage who live in lodging houses, whose standards are so low that they must be followed almost constantly by a cleaner, there is little hope. But the white Portuguese, whose homes are here, do make use of their little squares of earth. The Irish, too, show an inclination to cultivate their little yards, and even the Poles keep the bushes they have inherited from Irish predecessors, and often add a small vegetable patch. The French Canadians, who are more inclined to rent than to buy or build, do some planting, and the Jews, when they have so far established themselves as to feel a sense of permanency, are not behind the others. In those districts where the well-to-do of this people have established themselves, as in the southern end of the fifth ward, there are as attractive yards as can be found in Providence. With the Italians it is necessary only to give opportunity. Until their thrift has covered so much of the earth that the sun is shut out, they utilize every available foot. Where space for nothing else exists they plant the vines from whose grapes they make a cheap wine. In the city, as in the country, the Italian home is proclaimed by its vine-covered arbor. When there is no longer space about the house they cultivate neighboring vacant



A House on a rear lot—Atwells Avenue

The new house blocks all the side windows of the old house. An instance of overcrowding.



Shall Providence progress from these



to bare cleanliness



or to gardens?

THE USE OF THE LAND

lots, and are undismayed even by such unpromising fields as the steep hillside between Ridge Street and the New Haven tracks.

But to treat of Providence gardens in terms of nationalities is to treat of them inadequately. They are a tradition of the city, making beautiful its most neglected corners. In Penelope Court there is such a garden, the pride of an old German couple who have lived where they now are from their youth, have seen their friends and neighbors die or move away and the surrounding houses pass into the hands of negroes and Armenians. Around the corner from dilapidated, deserted rookeries on Richmond Street, scarcely a stone's throw from tenements that shut out the sun from little yards, are other dwellings surrounded by grass and flowers. Providence may decide to encourage the apartment and the tenement, to concentrate land values in its downtown districts by covering them to the utmost with buildings, but if it does it will become a much less pleasant place in which to live.

In the six districts studied intensively gardens, vines, etc., were found as follows:

	Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totals
	A	B	A	B	C					
None	34	39	35	20	28	47	70	32	43	348
Yes	20	19	5	26	8	51	51	58	58	296
Totals	54	58	40	46	36	98	121	90	101	644

IV

The Supply of Dwellings

Some two or three years ago a speaker at a housing conference in Massachusetts declared that if the supply of dwellings in a city is adequate to its needs that city need not worry about the character of its dwellings, for the builders, in response merely to the promptings of self-interest, will provide constantly better and better types of houses in order to secure tenants. It were well if the problem were so simple. Providence proves it is not. Providence is adequately supplied with dwellings. Real-estate men say that the demand exceeds the supply only at the two ends of the scale, the small single-family house—the type that every community desires to multiply—and the apartment house—the type that communities with experience wish to see decrease. Yet the real-estate men are practically unanimous in believing that the cottage does not pay as an investment. But this is a question for later consideration.* The point here is that Providence, to-day adequately supplied with dwellings, tends to provide for a constantly increasing proportion of its families, dwellings of an inferior type.

No one who goes about Providence with this question in his mind can fail to be impressed by the number of "To Rent" signs and by the number of deserted houses. The "To Rent" signs are on dwellings of every grade, from the high-priced mansion to the cheap three-decker. The deserted houses are, naturally, of the cheaper grades; still there seems no reason why they should not be occupied when one notices the character of buildings in the neighborhood that have tenants. Inquiry nearly always brings the answer that the owner failed to make repairs. Left tenantless the building rapidly deteriorates; it becomes the haunt of vagrants or of others with clandestine purposes; those who have need of firewood strip it of doors and boards until it becomes not merely an eyesore and a public nuisance, but sometimes even a tottering wreck that threatens to fall upon the passerby. Of such houses was "Shoo Fly Village" composed. Such houses stand on Richmond and nearby streets, on West Exchange, and in other parts of the city. In one of the districts selected for intensive study there were eleven of them.

MULTIPLE DWELLINGS INCREASE

Yet with an adequate supply of dwellings, with a demand that exceeds supply for cottages, Providence is increasing the proportion

* See Part VIII, Building and Management.

THE SUPPLY OF DWELLINGS

of its three-deckers and other multiple dwellings. The census of 1900 gives the following figures:

One-family houses	14,512
Two-family houses	8,622
Three-family houses	1,313
Six-family houses	85
Ten-family houses	2
Eleven-family and more, houses	7

Unfortunately the census of 1910, among its other omissions, omitted a similar classification, so we cannot tell just what was the change during the intervening decade. But from memoranda in the Building Inspector's office we have learned what has been the tendency during the years 1911-1915 inclusive. The classification of these figures by wards and years, showing the number of houses of different heights and occupied by from one to eight or more families, will be found on another page. Here we shall merely give a summary, which tells the story with sufficient clearness.

NUMBER OF HOUSES OF DIFFERENT TYPES BUILT IN PROVIDENCE DURING THE YEARS 1911-1915

	1 fam.	2 fam.	3 fam.	6 fam.	8 & more fam.	1 sto. and 1½	2 sto. and 2½	3 sto. and 3½	4 sto. and over
1911	149	126	198	15	0	47	227	220	0
1912	146	142	180	14	4	57	233	194	4
1913	172	147	135	10	3	57	254	157	2
1914	134	124	117	13	0	49	206	138	0
1915	169	133	130	7	1	75	229	138	0
Total Houses	770	672	760	59	7	285	1149	748	6
Total Families	770	1344	2280	354					

During these five years more families have been provided for in three-deckers than in one and two-family houses combined. The only grain of comfort lies in the fact that during the past three years the number of new three-deckers and larger tenements has decreased slightly, but so slightly as to afford ground for nothing more than hope.

In the six districts selected for intensive study the number of families per house, with one exception, averages higher than in the city as a whole, or even in the new buildings tabulated above; for these districts are representative of those where overcrowding will first appear. In one of these districts* the average is actually lower than in the new buildings, a reminder of the higher standards of a previous generation. In both the Italian districts the average number of families per dwelling ranges from three to four, though the second of these districts is far out, where the erection of multiple dwellings is not stimulated by scarcity of building sites.

* No. 4, Ship and Elm streets.

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NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND HOUSES BY DISTRICTS*

	Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totals
	A	B	A	B	C					
Families	167	173	143	166	145	254	227	266	276	2117
Houses	53	58	40	46	35	97	105	89	100	644*
Average	3.15	2.98	3.57	3.61	4.14	2.61	2.16	3.	2.76	3.2

* 21 vacant and deserted houses.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES PER HOUSE BY DISTRICTS

No. Families	Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totl.
	A	B	A	B	C					
1	11	4	3	2	2	7	26	13	6	74
2	17	20	9	6	4	51	58	31	53	249
3	4	22	15	21	11	22	7	19	17	138
4	10	5	5	6	3	11	10	8	15	73
5	0	3	0	1	4	2	0	10	4	24
6	9	4	6	10	10	3	4	7	4	57
7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
8	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
9	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
12	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Vacant houses*	0	0	0	0	0	1	11	1	1	14
Miss.**	1	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	7
Totals	54	58	40	46	36	98	121	90	101	644

* Vacant—Whole house vacant or deserted. No record of vacant tenements.

** Miscellaneous—Rooming Houses; Refused, etc.

OCCUPANCY OF HOUSES BY DISTRICTS

	Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totl.
	A	B	A	B	C					
1 Family only	11	4	3	2	2	7	19	13	7	68
1 Suite per Floor	16	42	25	28	15	71	63	48	67	375
2 Suites per Floor	18	9	9	13	13	15	14	18	18	127
3 Suites per Floor	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Mixed*	6	3	1	3	5	4	6	9	7	44
Miscellaneous	1	0	0	0	1	1	19	2	1	25
Totals	54	58	40	46	36	98	121	90	101	644

* For instance, as a dwelling and a store.

BASEMENTS AND ATTICS

	Dist. 1		Dist. 2		Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totl.
	A	B	A	B	C				
Basements	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Attics occupied	18	18	6	8	1	5	1	6	16
All attics	48	49	18	14	7	89	96	54	82
									457



The Three-Decker's progress, north of Promenade Street



Deserted Houses. Richmond Street, near Ship Street



Note how the new tenement house blocks Messenger Street, almost cutting it in two. Messenger Street has never been accepted by the city. It has no public sewer. Yet it is lined with large tenement houses against whose encroachments the city does nothing. Dwellings of this kind are not producing lower rents for Providence.



Lily Street, on the edge of one of the Italian inspection districts. Lily Street is thirty feet wide, not wide enough to have four-story tenement houses on either side. In a house on the left there was a fire two or three days before our visit. The flames went up a vent shaft which furnishes what air they get, but no light, to a stack of water-closets and bedrooms. The furniture in the bedrooms was burned; the people escaped.

THE SUPPLY OF DWELLINGS

Such tables as these, necessary as they are to check up one's impressions, do not present a picture of the city. They tell us beyond controversy what the tendency in building is, but they do not show the houses as they are. They do not show the endless combination of dwelling with store, garage, workshop, stable, even in one instance with a church. Nor do the tables for new buildings show the total additional provision that is being made for families. It was not possible to get from the records information as to houses which have been enlarged by raising them and inserting a new story beneath, by building a new story on top, by changing the attic into a full story. Sometimes a barn or workshop is converted into a tenement. That there is a great deal of such alteration is the belief of the Building Inspector.

EVERY TYPE OF DWELLING IN PROVIDENCE

A picture of Providence housing would include more than this. During its long history the city has had bestowed upon it samples of nearly every kind of dwelling. Of the fine houses that date from the early days of the Republic and from Colonial times we have no cause to speak, except in those few instances where neglect has changed them from objects of pride into objects of reproach. The best of these old houses call for nothing but praise from the housing worker. Even their successors, with some of which the architects find fault, form no part of a housing problem. Set in large grounds, with spacious rooms, supplied by well-to-do owners with the so-called modern conveniences, their chief use for us is as examples of what should be done. Some of the new large houses are worthy successors of these old mansions. Even more admirable from a housing point of view, for they shelter people of more slender means, are smaller houses, such as those along Blackstone Boulevard, in Edgewood and Auburn.

But with, or closely following the best of the older types, came another, the row house, borrowed, perhaps, like so much else in Providence, from the England of a past generation, or perhaps from Boston, New York or Philadelphia. There are several groups of these houses. Some are well planned, and, like the Philadelphia variety, have abundant light in every room. Some, however, follow New York and Baltimore precedent by having dark middle rooms. Perhaps it is these that have created the prejudice against row houses that exists in Providence. Of course, they are not to be compared with the detached house, whose windows, opening to the four points of the compass, welcome in the sun and breeze. But when one notes the intrusion of the apartment house he must hope that a recent attempt to re-establish the row, with janitor and other apartment-house service, may prove successful. The apartment house has as yet scarcely secured a foothold, and it is seldom more than three stories high. Its appeal, of course, is to those who wish a temporary stopping place or who desire to escape the responsibility of housekeeping. It is wel-

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

came by the real-estate broker, who finds a demand for its conveniences. So far, each house stands alone, profiting by the advantages of a residence neighborhood. Its menace for the future, when, with increasing numbers, it will depreciate values and change the social life and atmosphere of the city, is not yet realized.

The cottage, as the building records show, is still a favorite type, and is to be found in every part of the city, but especially in the newer districts of the second, third, sixth and eighth wards, as well as in Cranston and East Providence. But, though the demand for cottages may exceed the supply, the two-family houses (one family above the other) shelter a considerably larger part of the population. In 1900 it provided for 17,244 families, as against 14,512 in single-family houses. During the past five years it has provided for 1,344 families, as against 770 in single-family houses. The two-family type has long been established here, and while the tenant's preference may be for a cottage, the investment value of the two-family house under present methods weighs down the balance.

The three-decker is a more recent comer, and its rapid multiplication was due to the investment argument. If two families pay better than one, then three should pay better than two. But housing arithmetic is not so simple as that, and though the three-decker is today nearly ubiquitous, there are signs, among them the "To Let" signs, which indicate that its popularity is failing. Only among the Jews and the Italians does it seem to have been a pronounced success. But while the former are planting their three-deckers closer together, the latter are going on to double three-deckers, six-family houses and larger tenements.

In this progression the Italians are matched by the native born, who also have recommenced the building of large tenement blocks, usually of frame construction, but more and more of brick. Recommenced is the needed word, for among its samples Providence contains some old tenement blocks that might well have been lifted bodily from the lower east side of Manhattan, solid masses of brick, with narrow courts.

There was one element of truth in the idea which the speaker quoted at the beginning of this section sought to express. At least, the evidence submitted by Providence would support such a contention. Comparatively few of the inhabited dwellings are in very bad disrepair. The supply of dwellings in all but a few districts being adequate, the tenant moves out when the house gets too bad. The poorer quarters of the city may be dusty and dingy, streets may be barren and ugly, yards may be earth, packed hard by the feet of the tenants and their children, but the houses are nearly always weather tight and dry; stairs and floors may be worn, walls scratched and marked, but usually they are sound. So again Providence may compare itself with other cities, and, though it has little cause for pride, will find no cause for shame in the comparison.

THE SUPPLY OF DWELLINGS

NEW DWELLINGS IN PROVIDENCE ERECTED DURING THE YEARS 1911-1915 INCLUSIVE

NUMBER OF FAMILIES

1911

Wards	1 fam.	1 & s.*	2 fam.	2 & s.	3 fam.	3 & s.	4 fam.	4 & s.	5 & s.	6 fam.	8 fam.	Totls
1	3				8							11
2	60		35		27					2		124
3	13		17		29				1	5		65
4	1		3	1	3		1			2		11
5			2	1	28			1				32
6	36		35	1	35							107
7	10		8		9							27
8	17		12		35		2	1				67
9	1		1	1	9	1				5		18
10	8		9		14					1		32
Houses	149		122	4	197	1	3	2	1	15		494
Families	149		244	8	591	3	12	8	5	90		1110

*1 & s., 1 family and store.

1912

Wards	1 fam.	1 & s.	2 fam.	2 & s.	3 fam.	3 & s.	4 fam.	4 & s.	5 & s.	6 fam.	8 fam.	Totls.
1	3	2	4		2					1	1	13
2	67		39	1	27					3	1*	138
3	16	1	19	2	17					4		59
4					4							4
5					22					1		23
6	24		41		24							89
7	7		5		7						1*	20
8	11		18	1	30					1		61
9	1	1	2		13		1		1	2		21
10	13		9	1	34					2	1*	60
Houses	142	4	137	5	180		1		1	14	4	488
Families	142	4	274	10	540		4		5	84		

*Ward 2, twelve families.

Ward 7, twelve families.

Ward 10, nine families and store.

1913

Wards	1 fam.	1 & s.	2 fam.	2 & s.	3 fam.	3 & s.	4 fam.	4 & s.	5 & s.	6 fam.	8 fam.	Totls.
1	5		1		3							9
2	73		37	1	10							121
3	31	1	20	2	20	1	1			7		83
4	1		2		4						2*	9
5	1		2		24						1*	28
6	29		29	1	24							83
7	1		4		4							9
8	12	2	20	2	17	1						54
9			3	1	8	1		2		2		17
10	15	1	22		18					1		57
Houses	168	4	140	7	132	3	1	2		10	3	470
Families	168	4	280	14	396	9	4	8		60		

* Ward 4, Copley chambers.

Ward 4, 1 contains 24 apartments.

Ward 5, three stores and 24 apartments.

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

1914

Wards	1 fam.	1 & s.	2 fam.	2 & s.	3 fam.	3 & s.	4 fam.	4 & s.	5 & s.	6 fam.	8 fam.	Totls.
1	2		2		2					1		7
2	41	1	32		4					2		80
3	17	1	17		17		1	1				54
4	1		1		2					3		7
5	1		2		12							15
6	27		14	1	39							81
7	11		16		4							31
8	12		26		16			1		1		56
9			1*	2	5		1			4		13
10	20		9	1	16			1		2		49
Houses	132	2	120	4	117		2	3		13		393
Families	132	2	240	8	351		8	12		78		

* Ward 9, two families and a church.

1915

Wards	1 fam.	1 & s.	2 fam.	2 & s.	3 fam.	3 & s.	4 fam.	4 & s.	5 & s.	6 fam.	8 fam.	Totls.
1	9	1	4									14
2	62		43	1	12		1					119
3	21	1	19	5	11							57
4	2				26	1				1		30
5	2				7							9
6	24		27	1	33					1	1	87
7	10		8	1	7					1		27
8	17	5	16	3	15							56
9					3			1		4		8
10	15		5		15							35
Houses	162	7	122	11	129	1	1	1		7	1	442
Families	162	7	244	22	387	3	4	4		42		

NUMBER OF STORIES

1911

Wards	1 story	1½ story	2 story	2½ story	3 story	3½ story	4 story	Total
1			1	2	4	4		11
2		8	31	56	13	16		124
3	3	5	13	10	26	8		65
4				4	5	2		11
5			1	2	19	10		32
6	5	13	15	40	9	25		107
7	1	2	5	10	4	5		27
8		6	15	8	21	17		67
9			1		17			18
10		4	2	11	11	4		32
Totals	9	38	84	143	129	91		494

THE SUPPLY OF DWELLINGS

1912

Wards	1 story	1½ story	2 story	2½ story	3 story	3½ story	4 & over	Total
1			3	7		2	1*	13
2	1	12	26	69	8	22		138
3	6	7	8	17	11	10		59
4					1	3		4
5					3	20		23
6	1	8	5	53	3	19		89
7	2	4	1	6	3	4		20
8	1	9	10	9	6	26		61
9			3		10	6	2*	21
10	2	4	7	9	5	32	1*	60
Totals	13	44	63	170	50	144	4*	488

* Ward 1, 8 stores, apartment hotel.

1913

Wards	1 story	1½ story	2 story	2½ story	3 story	3½ story	4 story	Total
1			1	5	1	2		9
2	2	11	29	68	4	7		121
3	9	9	17	18	13	17		83
4			2		3	2	2	9
5	1			2	4	21		28
6	2	7	12	36	8	18		83
7				5		4		9
8	4	6	10	14	7	13		54
9			3		14			17
10	2	5	10	21	8	11		57
Totals	19	38	85	169	62	95	2	470

1914

Wards	1 story	1½ story	2 story	2½ story	3 story	3½ story	4 story	Total
1			1	3	2	1		7
2		4	19	49	5	3		80
3	7	5	13	11	8	10		54
4			1	2	3	1		7
5			1	3	1	10		15
6	4	7	17	13	5	35		81
7	1	4	5	18	1	2		31
8	4	6	14	14	8	10		56
9					9	4		13
10	3	4	12	10	10	10		49
Totals	19	30	83	123	52	86		393

1915

Wards	1 story	1½ story	2 story	2½ story	3 story	3½ story	Total	Brick	Tot.
1			7	7			14		
2	5	10	36	55	4	9	119		
3	8	6	16	14	6	7	57		3
4	1				9	20	30		
5		1	1	1	6		9		
6	4	11	13	23	11	23	85		
7	1	5	7	8	3	4	28		1
8	8	4	9	17	12	7	57	1	(Concrete)
9				6	1	1	8		
10	4	7	3	6	5	10	35		
Totals	31	44	92	137	57	81	442		

V

Fire Hazard

One of the few safe generalizations about Providence is that it is largely a city of wooden structures. In the residence districts frame construction, except for the most expensive houses, is so predominant that it gives a character to the whole community. That this material adds to the fire hazard there could be no question even had there been no conflagrations in Chelsea and Salem. The fire underwriters, of course, are awake to this hazard, and are exerting themselves to reduce it. Within the fire limits frame construction is permitted for only a short list of buildings, such as temporary sheds and small grain elevators. Within these limits, also, incombustible roof coverings are required on new buildings and on old buildings reroofed. An effort to secure an extension of this roofing requirement to other districts where frame dwellings are crowded resulted in so much opposition that it was given up. The hazard remains, however, and the underwriters, after seeking to protect themselves by raising their rates in certain of these congested districts, again arousing an outcry that caused them to modify this plan, are now making a house-to-house canvass of the city and revising their rates in accordance with conditions affecting individual houses. They recognize the increased hazard in the large tenement blocks and the danger from shingle roofs by increasing the rate. They also recognize that when dwellings are too close together the peril is greater, so if two dwellings are within five feet of each other they are rated as if they were one house containing the combined number of families.

LESSONS TAUGHT BY EXPERIENCE

The pressure thus exerted may be expected to hasten somewhat the use of incombustible materials for external walls and roofs. But so long as the interest of builder and buyer is centered in the initial cost of a dwelling rather than in its cost over a series of ten or twenty years, more substantial construction will wait upon an equalization of the cost of wood and other building materials. Meanwhile the community, from the point of view of fire hazard alone, should maintain the present standard of open spaces about dwellings; for such open spaces not only serve to check the spread of fire from one building to another, but they afford the firemen needed opportunity to fight the flames.

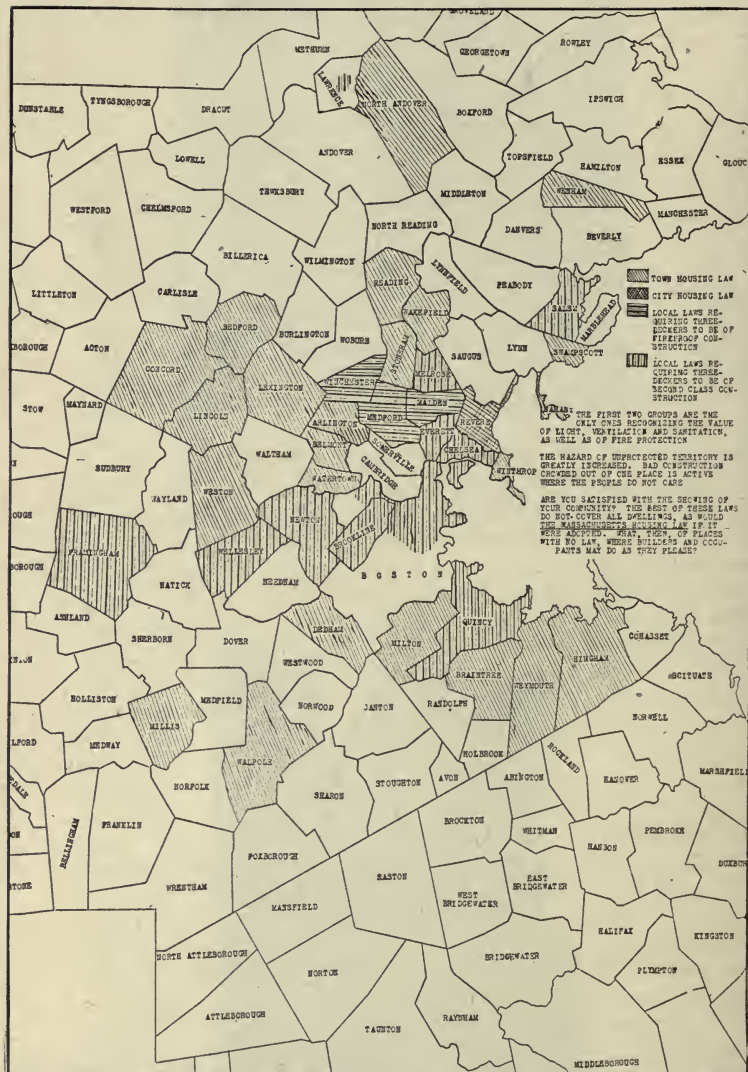
While Providence is spared such a lesson as neighboring cities have had, its builders probably will continue to accept their risk, for the chance of mishap to each seems too remote to warrant much un-



This new tenement house, which stretches from Albro to Messenger Street, has forty windows opening on a three-foot side yard. Some day it will have a neighbor as big as itself. Then its windows will be darkened.



An old tenement house with a narrow court



Map Showing Progress of Housing Laws in Massachusetts

FIRE HAZARD

easiness. Statistics mean little to men who are moved only by what they see, and these form the great majority. Yet statistics prepare even the most unimaginative to understand the meaning of a lesson when at last it is taught. So such publicity work as that of the National Board of Fire Underwriters is having its effect, and in city after city is not only causing the erection of a constantly increasing proportion of less inflammable buildings, but is arousing to constructive action those who have a broad view of the community's interests.

One of the most significant illustrations of this is the report made a few years ago by the Committee on Fire Prevention of the Boston Chamber of Commerce. This committee made a thorough study of the subject and presented facts and recommendations of practical interest to other cities where frame construction is common. It studied not only the fire hazard, but questions of cost, maintenance and depreciation as well.* Among its recommendations were:

The enactment of city ordinances which shall prohibit the construction of any third-class building within the city limits.

The enactment of a law prohibiting the construction of any but fireproof buildings within the congested business district of the city.

Though Providence shares with Boston the advantage of being one of the two cities in New England rated as first class, the adoption by it of the first of these recommendations would be too severe, since, unlike Boston, it has within its limits large areas adapted to the erection of widely spaced one and two-family houses. But there are other large areas in the city where such a prohibition would prove a measure of economy. Divided as these areas now are among a multitude of owners, the chance of loss to the individual is so small that each believes he can afford to run it; but if they were all owned by one individual or by a corporation with the foresight that our large corporations are developing, the feeling would be quite different. The insurance companies and the city as a whole stand in a position analogous to that of such a corporation. The many scattered small losses are a constant drain upon them, while there is ever present the danger of a conflagration.

OTHER CITIES SAFEGUARD THEMSELVES

It was reasoning similar to this that led Bridgeport, Conn., and Brookline, Mass., to adopt ordinances prohibiting the erection of frame three-deckers. Brookline is one of more than thirty-six** Massachusetts towns and cities which have now protected themselves in this way. Its action is noteworthy because it lies in the midst of an area that had not yet taken similar action and because its Town Improvement Committee, in urging prohibition of wooden three-deckers, presented a printed statement of facts and conclusions that are of

* See Part VIII, Building and Management.

** Full number not available. See accompanying map.

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

value elsewhere. This statement calls attention not only to the increased risk due to wooden buildings, but also to the increased expense for insurance, fire apparatus, hydrants and water supply. Providence has taken a short step in this direction by requiring brick side walls on closely placed frame buildings.

Next to kind of construction and to land occupancy (discussed in Part III) the most important element in housing, from the fire hazard point of view, is the height of the dwellings. Here once more the steady, regular growth of the city has favored it, for, as indicated by the following table, the great majority of dwellings are of three stories or less.

NUMBER OF STORIES PER HOUSE BY DISTRICTS

Stories	Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totls.
	A	B	A	B	C					
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
1A*	9	2	2	0	2	8	14	17	13	67
2	1	1	0	4	0	3	9	6	6	30
2A	28	44	17	7	4	56	76	32	60	324
3	4	6	16	28	25	6	14	29	11	139
3A	10	4	1	7	3	24	6	4	9	68
4	1	1	4	0	2	1	1	1	0	11
4A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Total	54	58	40	46	36	98	121	90	101	644

* 1A means one story and attic, etc.

But during the past few years a change has begun. Higher tenements are being erected and old dwellings are being altered so as to increase their height. Even when alterations are not made attics are more frequently used as bedrooms instead of for storage. The tables on another page indicate how inadequate is the means of egress from these top floors. This inadequacy is increased by the fact that many of the attic stairs are winders, breakneck affairs that greatly increase the hazard for people seeking to escape in the panic and confusion of a night alarm.

FIRE-ESCAPES

Supplementary to stairs are the fire-escapes ordered by the Building Inspector. His department, some four years ago, following the 1912 report of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, made a survey of the city and required that many buildings be equipped with these means of egress. But even this action has failed to provide for the safety of occupants of attic bedrooms. Fire-escapes are at best but a confession of failure to build properly. They are ugly and expensive; only with difficulty are they kept in good condition and unobstructed. And even then they do not adequately fulfill their purpose, for flames or smoke from a lower window effectively close them to people from above. But where other and better means of egress

FIRE HAZARD

are lacking, they are necessary. In the variety of its fire-escapes Providence has shown in a most entertaining way the individuality of its people. They are of iron, and so far as our inspections went they are, with a few exceptions,—always excepting attic bedrooms,—adequate. But there is among them a variety that baffles any attempt at brief description. In the six districts studied intensively we found:

		Dist. 1		Dist. 2			Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Totls.
Number of	{	A	B	A	B	C					
Fire-Escapes	}	1	0	16	11	11	2	0	21	6	68

VI

Standards of Living

If they followed their inclination the great majority of people would probably live in family groups and would choose for their group a dwelling separate from that of others, surrounded by a garden, spacious enough within and so arranged as to permit privacy for the individual, and equipped with those so-called conveniences, really necessities, that make for decency, cleanliness and order. Of course, there are some to whom such a dwelling does not appeal, some who have no liking for family life, who feel no craving for open spaces or growing things. There are others who apparently care little for privacy and have small regard for cleanliness and order.

If the first group were not a minority the world would end and our concern for the future end with it. Even if that part of the first group whose lack is only of appreciation for open spaces were not a minority the world would suffer through its children. As for the second group, its lack is mostly seeming. Like children, its members may fail to understand the value of privacy and cleanliness until these habits have been taught and retaught. But once learned, the habits remain unless changed by pressure of environment. The congenitally filthy and promiscuous are as rare as the hermits.

If any among our alien peoples seem now to violate this rule we may be confident that it is merely because in the lands of their origin there was no opportunity for the maintenance of good standards. And if they fail immediately to embrace what we consider American standards, we must take into account not only that it is more difficult to train adults than it is to train children, that it is more difficult to train a group than to train an individual, but that the environment into which they come is often such as to discourage the learning of better habits.

Providence furnishes illustration of the desire of people to live in ways which age-long experience has taught is wholesome. If the desire is not fulfilled the reasons should be sought by a community which takes thought for its future. Despite the constantly increasing proportion of families who are housed in multiple dwellings, the demand for single-family houses exceeds the supply. What is the reason? Despite an evident desire for space, land is being filled. Despite a pride in family privacy, lodgers are being taken. Despite desire for cleanliness, many families live in dirty surroundings.

This desire for the better way is, of course, not universal. There are many who have not known anything better than they now have, and being without ambition or initiative, accept what they find. There

STANDARDS OF LIVING

are others naturally slatternly and lazy. But in every neighborhood there are many who would live better if they could. Giving them the opportunity will greatly hasten progress. So it is of practical value to learn how much of present depressing environment can be changed by community action so as to release and stimulate the desire for improvement. Even more important is it to learn if and how the present environment is becoming more depressing, making more hopeless the efforts of those who aspire to a better standard of living.

ACCEPTANCE OF LOWER STANDARDS

An American family moving to a new city will often accept a dwelling place considerably below the standard to which it has been accustomed, especially if that dwelling is comparatively inexpensive, until it has a chance to "look around." If this family proposes to make only a short stay in the new city, or if its plans for the future are uncertain, it will put up with cramped and uncomfortable quarters which otherwise it would not consider. Such families as these create a "demand" that is not negligible. Their frequent removals are a cause of profit to brokers. Consequently they are catered to. Joined by local families who for various reasons wish to rid themselves of household responsibilities, they are seriously affecting the character of the housing in the best residence districts. That this "demand" is in large degree legitimate makes the problem the more difficult; for while a family may be content, temporarily, to accept inferior accommodation, that which is temporary for it is permanent for the city. For this reason it is essential for the city to set definite minimum standards for its apartment houses if it does not wish to see a progression with constantly smaller apartments, with constantly smaller open spaces for light and air.

Already Providence has apartment houses which it would be sorry to see duplicated and whose erection in large numbers it would view with dismay. Yet that is what Providence will see unless it prevents. That it has taken several years to establish the few apartment houses now in existence is no cause for comfort. Innovations, good or bad, gain a foothold but slowly, especially in an old and well-established community. But once they have secured their foothold, once they have been accepted, they have a way of spreading almost over night. Providence will have many more apartment houses unless it develops a type of dwelling which combines apartment house conveniences with the social advantages of the private dwelling. Now is the time for it to determine what those apartment houses must provide in the way of light, air, privacy, sanitation and protection against fire.

THE IMMIGRANTS' REACTION

If American families will accept lower standards of living upon moving to a new city, there is no occasion for surprise if immigrants

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

from foreign countries will, upon their arrival, accept the worst that is offered them. Living here is more expensive than it was in the old land; the remnant of their savings after paying for passage is pitifully small. Yet it must be made to last until they are established. So they incline to take the cheapest dwelling they can get and to underbid the present holders of jobs. As with the American family which takes temporary quarters while "looking around," the makeshift residence is often occupied far longer than was first intended. And the constant stream of arrivals soon makes what, had it been confined to one family, or a few, would be a matter of small concern, one of very great concern. For it sets a new and lower standard of living for whole groups, and by making this lower standard general and familiar, causes it to seem normal and proper.

Such an acceptance of lower standards is now going on in Providence at a rate which should cause concern. The crowding of families together in multiple dwellings has, among some nationalities, passed the stage of temporary expediency and become a matter of habit. The most successful among the Italians on Federal Hill, of the Jews along Chalkstone Avenue, will move into other districts, where they will live as Americans live. They will send their children to the high schools and the university, and these children may become thoroughly Americanized. But they are the exceptions. The mass of their people will continue in the way they are now going. The districts in which they live will become more and more compact. Nothing short of demolition by the public authorities and at public expense will ever lessen the burden on the land. Not even a conflagration will help, for the foundations remain. Whatever change there has been in the burned districts of Salem and San Francisco has been in the direction of greater crowding.

ROOM OVERCROWDING

Equally serious in its present results and in its effects upon character is the room overcrowding which annually became greater until the European war lessened the number of immigrants, except those from Portugal, which now is sending an unusual number of women, children and men beyond military age. Whether Providence has as much of a lodger problem as other cities we are not sure, as our inspections were made during months (May to August) when construction and similar gangs of unattached men are out of the city. But here, as elsewhere, those longer in the country take in newly arrived friends and relatives. Still room overcrowding apparently has not yet become so serious as it has in many other places, and Providence has opportunity to maintain fairly good standards.

THE DANGER INCREASING

The types of dwellings, one, two and three-family detached houses, has kept the size of apartments, both as to number of rooms

STANDARDS OF LIVING

and area of rooms, fairly adequate. There was little saving to be made by cutting out one or two rooms per dwelling or by shrinking their size. So the prevailing apartment or dwelling has four or five rooms and often one or two attic rooms added. These attic rooms we found frequently unused, or used only for storage, though there is an increasing tendency to use them for bedrooms. Cellar dwellings, a serious menace in some cities, are infrequent. But with the coming of the large tenement house containing several families on a floor, as with the apartment house, the old safeguards are down. Now the owner can figure a profit by skimping, for smaller rooms make possible more rooms, and fewer rooms per apartment make possible more apartments. Attics have no place in these large buildings, but basements and finished cellars have, and with them comes the temptation to use them for living-rooms. So Providence must act now if it does not wish to see present standards gradually lowered. Its present legal minimum is somewhat less than New York's.

DARK AND GLOOMY ROOMS

More pronounced than the tendency to diminish the size of apartments is that to render them less habitable by shutting out light and air. Providence still has enough dwellings, so that it is not easy to rent a gloomy room, and in several instances we found apartments where one room was not used because it had inadequate light. But with the crowding of buildings closer together, and with the increase of large tenement blocks, the number of dark and gloomy rooms is increasing. Already in the Atwells Avenue district and in that near Ship and Elm streets the people are beginning to accept such rooms. One tenement house on Lily Street was the scene of a fire in the spring. The flames went up an airshaft upon which open water-closets and bedrooms, some of the latter getting their only air from this shaft—it has no light to give. From the shaft the flames spread to the adjoining rooms, completely destroying their furnishings. In the Ship and Elm street district old houses, some built with dark middle rooms, some shut in by new buildings, are occupied by a mixed population that does not demand good surroundings.

But, as the tables show, it is not only in the most crowded Italian district, nor in that which is most forlorn, that inadequately lighted rooms are found. The present building code permits the lighting and ventilating of tenement and apartment house water-closets, bathrooms and storerooms by means of "vent" shafts. It requires for other rooms only that their windows shall open to the "external air," then stipulates that these windows shall be not less than three feet from an adjoining lot line or nearer than ten feet from any other building on the same premises, then permits outside fire-escapes or unenclosed stairs projecting not more than four feet to occupy this narrow space. Needless to say, advantage is taken of the permission. Windows

LIGHT AND VENTILATION

When windows are noted it means they are the only windows in the room

ATTICS WATER-CLOSETS OTHER THAN YARD OR CELLAR LIVING ROOMS

Inspection District	Without Window				Inadequate L. and V.				Window to Room or Hall				Without Windows								Inadequate L. and V.				Window to Room or Hall				Vent Shaft				Without Windows				Too Small Windows				Too Inadequate Space				Window to Room or Hall																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																											
	Houses	Rooms	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R	H	R																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																
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open on courts that pinch the law, and in these courts, themselves inadequate, are fire-escapes and stairways.

So far the tenants have not suffered to the full from this laxity, for in most cases courts face open spaces on neighboring lots. When the neighboring lots are filled the rooms opening upon the courts will become gloomy caverns. And this in a city which has ample opportunity to spread out so that all its people may have air and sun.

LODGING HOUSES

Our investigation disclosed a surprisingly small number of men lodgers in families except in the Fox Point district. If this was not due to their temporary absence on out-of-town construction work, it may be that from those immigrant peoples, who usually eke out their income in this way, Providence has drawn a remarkably small proportion of unattached men. But from other peoples who leave their women at home it has drawn considerable numbers of single men. The Bravas or black Portuguese often form groups or clubs which rent a house, pay one of their number to be housekeeper, and share the rooms. Or they rent a bed, or half a bed, from some landlord who keeps, or vainly tries to keep, the premises in order. Armenians, Turks and Poles have similar lodging houses scattered through the older parts of the city. The Jews have several lodging houses kept by man and wife.

The Brava houses are described in some detail later. The others visited offer little for criticism. Most of them were bare and comfortless, but they were fairly clean and apparently not greatly overcrowded. The type of house prevents the development in them of the worst conditions, for nearly all are small detached buildings with abundant light and air. Some have cellars, but these are not occupied for living purposes. All are supplied with water, though bathing facilities are usually limited to a faucet over a sink or basin. The toilets vary from a good indoor closet, to unlighted, vent-pipe ventilated spaces in the best Jewish and Turkish houses, and to an inaccessible privy back of an Armenian house.

None of these places come under the Providence definition of a lodging house, as their tenants are lodged for more than a week at a time. In fact, there are only four lodging houses in the city, according to the definition and the ruling of the city authorities. These four are licensed and inspected by the Building Inspector for fire egress, by the Health Department for toilets and ventilation, and by the police.

Though such groups of men as those described are of nowhere near the importance to the community as are family groups, yet their dwellings should be under some supervision. If they could be considered without relation to the rest of the community they might be dismissed with little concern, but not only in their work, in their social life as well, they mingle with others. And even in their houses they affect more or less directly neighboring family groups.

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ROOMING HOUSES

Also aside from the main purpose of the investigation are the furnished-room houses, of which there are a great number in the district between Weybosset Street and Hayward Park. Here old two and three-family houses have been cut up into small apartments of one, two and three rooms, which are rented in every possible combination and for any length of time, from one night up. This is a typical "blighted" district, existing, as many of its inhabitants do, on sufferance and from day to day, always hoping that something will turn up. The something for which the district is waiting is an extension of the business area. Meanwhile it gets along as it can, a tax upon the social agencies of the city. This district merges into that about Ship and Elm streets.

WATER SUPPLY

Irrespective of the use to which houses are put, whether family dwellings, lodging houses or rooming houses, there are certain services which should be supplied,—water, toilets and waste collection. The first of these, which often calls for long description, may, in the case of Providence, be dismissed in a paragraph. Providence supplies practically every dwelling with city water. The carrying of water in pails for long distances and up steep flights of stairs is here an unknown drudgery. There is still room for improvement as regards the number of faucets in a dwelling, but this is something that may be left for the present to the law of supply and demand, while attention is concentrated upon more vital needs. With water inside every tenement the addition of a bathtub will follow, especially where a water-closet is required within every apartment. Already the tubless area is shrinking rapidly.

PRIVIES, CESSPOOLS AND PRIVATE SEWERS

Far more important in Providence is the problem of a proper supply of water-closets. Largely because of the number of unaccepted streets, there are considerable areas, even in densely populated districts, where the privy is the only facility provided. A census just completed by the Health Department shows 1,807 privies in the city. In other districts there are cesspools to which the city authorities pay no attention unless they become such nuisances that complaints are made by neighbors. Some districts are served only by private sewers, of which the inspectors see only the two ends,—the fixtures in the house and the connection with a public sewer. How large they are, whether properly constructed, no one knows. In fact, the records of their existence are but fragmentary. A large tenement house supercedes a small house, a new house is erected on the rear of a lot or on an adjoining lot, and connected with the old private sewer. No one knows whether this old sewer is still sound or whether it is discharging

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a considerable part of its contents into the soil. Probably it is inadequate, for the man who lays a private sewer seldom makes it larger than is necessary to serve his immediate purpose.

Here is one place where city planning should be of practical value, determining not only where and how new streets shall run, but the probable ultimate density of population, so that sewers, as well as other public services, may be adequate.* The initial cost of a larger pipe is not to be compared with the cost of tearing up streets and laying new pipes. Yet this latter is a cost which the city now faces, especially in some of the more crowded districts where private sewers now obtain. On Albion and Messenger streets, where the toilets comply with all regulations and where they are kept clean, there is an odor in the compartments and even out of doors which indicates that the private sewers serving the closely built tenement houses are not performing their function.

A map prepared for the committee shows the extent of the areas not properly sewered and those districts where privies are numerous. It is the basis for a constructive policy whose purpose would be the provision of proper and adequate sanitation. This policy should go further than the installation of a complete sewer system; it should include the proper removal of present privies and cesspools. No record is now kept of the latter, and when they are abandoned the practice is to fill them with ashes and garbage, though an attempt is made by the authorities to have them cleaned before filling. There is no ordinance or regulation requiring the cleaning of either cesspools or privy vaults, nor any which prevents the digging of new ones instead of cleaning out the old. When privies are replaced by water-closets no order is issued to remove the old structure. In one case we found an old privy in use, door unlocked and easily accessible from the street, although there was a water-closet for each family within the house. This was probably an exceptional case. Yet without a vigorous follow-up campaign, not only to compel connection with the sewer, but also to compel the removal and the proper disinfecting and filling of the old vault, the purpose aimed at will be only partially achieved.

OUTDOOR WATER-CLOSETS

In another way this purpose is only partially achieved when the substitute for the privy is a yard water-closet. Even if these were not subject to abuse because of the impossibility of holding any one responsible for their condition, even if they were not liable to freeze in the winter, despite anti-freezing fixtures, they are still as inaccessible at night and in bad weather, and at all times to children, the old and the sick, as are the privies. Our investigation did not disclose a very great number of them (see table), but enough to warrant calling at-

* This does not imply that existing public sewers are inadequate.

TOILETS IN THE SIX INSPECTION DISTRICTS

This table gives the kind of toilet accommodations provided for each house

LOCATION			NUMBER FAMILIES USING ONE COMPARTMENT					CLEANLINESS				REPAIR									
District	Number Houses	Yard W. C.	Privy	Suite	Hall	Cellar	Mixed*	Misc.**	One	One + and Two	Two + and Three	Three + and Four	Miscellaneous	Clean	Dirty	Filthy	Misc.***	Good	Fair	Bad	Misc.***
1A	54	17	7	8	2	12	8		19	15	6	14		37	5	5	7	21	25	5	3
1B	58	4	2	12	1	29	10		18	14	19	4	3	43	7	6	2	35	13	4	6
2A	40	0	1	16	12	6	5		26	6	6		2	31	6	2	1	25	11	1	3
2B	46	1	0	32	7	3	3		38	7	1			41	1	1	3	40	2	1	3
2C	36	0	0	23	5	2	5	1	28	7			1	26	4	0	6	19	15		2
3	98	1	4	54	3	29	5	2	62	26	4	3	3	74	13	7	4	63	19	11	5
4	121	3	2	37	7	43	10	19	56	35	2	4	24	78	17	5	21	57	38	7	19
5	90	0	7	33	26	18	5	1	53	31	2	3	1	75	6	3	6	62	18	5	5
6	101	9	1	12	3	69	6	1	28	54	9	3	7	75	23	0	3	69	30		2
	644	35	24	227	66	211	57	24	328	195	49	31	41	480	82	29	53	391	171	34	48

Percentage: 5.5, 3.7, 35, 10, 32.7, 9.2.

* House has toilet in more than one location., as cellar and hall.

** Vacant or abandoned houses, no one at home, refused, etc.

*** Some of the toilets in a house in one condition, some in another.



Furlong Court—ten dwellings and a stable. The plumber has just taken from the drain pipe of the basement water-closets one sock, two cans, one big knuckle-bone and a few minor items.



An unaccepted street near the heart of the City



Cellar water-closet reached by dark winding stairs. Flashlight photograph



Brava Lodging House on Wickenden Street. Attic bedrooms get light and air through skylights. Row of water-closets in the yard. There is one interior bedroom without windows.

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tention to their inadequacy. Perhaps they were a necessary step from the privy to the indoor toilet.

CELLAR WATER-CLOSETS

Much more menacing are the cellar water-closets. Though they share and then add to all the disadvantages of the outdoor toilet, except those due to inclement weather, Providence is accepting them in large numbers. They are difficult of access, often to be reached only by dark winding stairs, so a lamp or candle must be carried. Sometimes they may be reached only by outside stairs. These difficulties lead to the use of vessels in living-rooms which later must be carried downstairs. They cause children to learn the indecent habit of using streets, yards, out-buildings and public halls.

But in addition to difficulty of access they are often in themselves objectionable. Though less likely to freeze than the outdoor closets, they are more likely to be filthy, as they are usually poorly lighted. Cellar windows are small and not readily cleaned. Many cellar compartments have not even the advantage of a small, dirty window, but are put in a dark corner. In some cases one compartment has a window, that next to it none. In other cases two compartments share one window. Many women and children are afraid to use these compartments at night.

It is a truism that filth accumulates in dark places. Even in houses where the owner lives and where, consequently, regard for his own family leads him to try to keep the cellar toilets in a sanitary condition, they are seldom as clean as they should be. Filth gathers in the dark corners behind the fixtures, the constant emptying of slops saturates the woodwork and floor, so even when the cellar is dry the compartment is likely to be damp. When the owner does not live on the premises conditions are worse, fixtures rust, the flush gets out of order, floor and woodwork rot. In one cellar compartment two large fungi were found growing from under the platform.

INDOOR WATER-CLOSETS

In the newer dwellings on sewered streets closets are being placed within the apartment. In new tenement (four or more families) and apartment houses this is required by law except for one and two-room apartments. But in older buildings there are a considerable number of hall water-closets, some of them dark and poorly ventilated. It is in the older buildings that the greater part of the problem lies, except for what the city invites by its failure to provide sewers. Yet compared with cities that have closer building than Providence its problem is easy. There is usually space within each apartment for a proper water-closet. In the few exceptional cases there is ample space on the lot for a small addition to the house in which the fixtures

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

could be installed. All that is necessary is a demand for a better standard.

OUTBUILDINGS AND ANIMALS

For two reasons the question of outbuildings is not so important in Providence as it is in many other cities: first, there are comparatively few of them; second, most of the yards are so large that these buildings can be and usually are placed at such a distance from the dwelling that they do not add to the fire hazard or darken windows or obstruct means of egress.

But comparatively few as the outbuildings are, they are most difficult to tabulate. Omitting such questions as whether a pigeon-cote on a pole should be included and whether a grocery box containing one or two hens is a henhouse, there are some which are really puzzling. Is an old privy shelter now used as an ashbin to be classed as an outbuilding or as an ashbin? When a barn has a wagon shed attached, one end of which is used for chickens, the barn shared by two families, the chickens owned by another, how shall it be classified? Is an outbuilding set across a lot line, with two doors and a solid partition inside, to be counted as two buildings or one? Is a yard water-closet with four compartments, four doors, four flush tanks, four bowls, but one supply pipe and one drain, placed on the corner of four yards which are fenced off and serving four houses, to be called one shelter or four?

However interesting these questions may be to the investigators, their interest here is to illustrate again the individuality, the lack of rule, that distinguishes Providence housing, and to picture in brief the condition of some Providence back yards. But, except for some of the stables, the outbuildings are small menace. Though there are 66 swine licenses in force, permitting their holders to keep 111 swine, we found none of these animals in the six inspection districts, though we did see two or three hogs across a fence on a vacant lot. Swine and cows are a nuisance in densely populated areas, and the former in any considerable number are a nuisance near any urban dwellings. But apparently Providence does not suffer greatly from them. Horse stables are much more common, and some of those we found were not kept in satisfactory condition. Other animals and fowl, rabbits, chickens, pigeons, are kept even in the districts inspected, but not in large numbers.

DISPOSAL OF WASTES

At the beginning of our study we proposed to record all garbage receptacles and state whether they are of metal or wood, tight-covered and adequate. We prepared a similar classification for ashes to show whether bins or cans are provided, whether they are of brick, metal or wood, and in what condition they were found. But Providence individuality upset our plans.

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For reasons which it is difficult to answer so long as Providence garbage is fed to swine, the Health Department favors wooden receptacles. The receptacles in use include some metal cans, but much more numerous are kegs, butter firkins and boxes, while even baskets are not neglected. Generally a cover of some kind is laid across the top of the receptacle, but frequently it is of little use in keeping out flies and of no use in frustrating prowling rats, cats and dogs.

This matter of receptacles is of little moment now, however, since a very large proportion of the people in the crowded districts practically dispense with any. The Bravas of Fox Point have a happy-go-lucky way of disposing of their garbage by throwing it from door or window. After that the responsibility is the landlord's. Some tenants in other districts are equally easy in their habits. The result is yards greasy and foul with decaying animal matter that attracts swarms of flies. Much more common is the habit of using the ashbin as a garbage receptacle. In one instance we found this slovenly habit facilitated by means of a chute from the rear porches of the tenements to the garbage-ashbin.

Were these ashbins emptied frequently there would be good arguments in favor of the practice of mixing garbage with ashes. But the Providence tradition is to hoard one's ashes. In the better private residences a whole winter's accumulation is often kept until spring housecleaning, special brick vaults being constructed in the cellars for the purpose. Few of the poorer people can afford brick vaults, though we did find one great brick cavern in a tenement house yard, a veritable paragon of ashbins, with sliding covers and shakers. The owner was very proud of it. Usually, however, the bin is a more or less flimsy structure of boards. Though we found few of them overflowing, we found many leaking. And others we found where the aim of the tenant had been poor. Perhaps it was discouragement over such lack of skill that induced some landlords to dispense with a bin entirely and permit ashes, mixed with garbage, to be piled in a corner of the yard.

VII

Housekeeping

What shall we do with the "dirty neighbor"? We may have a good law to control housing; the Health Department may have reached the ideal when clean-up week lasts all the year round, and still the dirty neighbor remains not only an eyesore, but an actual health menace.

And what shall we do for the willing, strong, but ineffectual immigrant women from the small farm, the village, or the poorer quarters of some foreign city, ignorant of the demands of healthful community life and the use of modern conveniences? We have seen her in our kitchens, and her performances there are duplicated in a thousand tenement homes.

A great many of the unsanitary conditions of our large cities come from these two classes of women, the one shiftless, the other ignorant. They can balk or ruin, with a day's carelessness, a sanitary campaign on which the best thought of city officials, housing workers, and health officers have been put for months. What shall we do with the dirty neighbor and the ignorant mother?

Practically no part of Providence is free from the danger of contagion from sources that might be eliminated. Stables, privy vaults, rotting garbage and fly carriers can always be found just round the corner. Good housekeeping, municipal and individual, will cure many of the evils, but it must be taught to those who need it. How shall we do it?

First, we must know the extent of the problem, and the means at hand to deal with it. Nine out of ten will say when the question is first asked, But that is the work of the Health Department. Is it?

THE PORTUGUESE

For instance, in the older parts of Providence, both along the water front and near the mills and factories, are groups of old houses which should be scrapped, but which still bring in rents. The Health Department has spent much time in the past thirty years on the sanitary control of these houses, from which no one but the owner profits. But it would take a small army of inspectors to do what needs to be done, and the taxpayers will not stand the bills. It would take most of the time of one inspector, for instance, to look after the families who live in one group of houses in one yard on Wickenden Street. There are four houses,—two on the street, two on the rear of the

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lot,—with a total of seventeen families, and uncounted men living in groups. Three of the houses are of old-time frame construction, the floors decayed from years of scrubbing, the windows small, the cellar damp. The fourth is a new brick house, with six families.

There is a cold-water sink in every tenement, but every drop of warm water must be heated on the stove. The six families in the brick house share three inside water-closets. The other eleven families and the groups of men share four compartments in the yard.

The yard is on a hillside, the earth beaten hard by many feet, but slippery and puddled when it rains. At the rear is a large ashbin, and kegs for garbage are provided. There is not one attractive spot in houses or yard.

The owner has been called to account several times by the Health Department for the insanitary condition of his premises. Here is his side of the story as he told it to the inspectors for the housing committee. He was gentle, courteous, and gave an impression of sincerity and of wanting to do right.

"I built the new brick tenement with the idea that I would live here with my family and look after the four houses. But we had to move on account of the children, and now I come every day twice to clean up. It is so bad that I can't hire anybody to do it. Most of the families are Bravas, and no one else will rent where they are. They aren't so dirty in their houses, but they want the landlord to do everything outside, and they are worse than a lot of children to throw things about. They won't even walk out to the keg with their garbage, but throw it loose out of the window. When they use the toilets they never flush them. I have to sweep the yard, and wash the toilets with a hose, twice a day."

When asked why he didn't keep the yard toilets locked he said: "I have tried. First, I put on padlocks and gave every family a key, but the men are so strong they walked up and pulled out the staples rather than go get the key. Then I paid fifty cents for spring locks and put them inside, but the men put their shoulders against the doors and broke them open, tearing the locks out of the wood."

Down on lower Benefit Street an intelligent, socially minded white Portuguese woman has been made housekeeper for two tenement houses, with eight families, in the same yard. "God sent me no children, so I have taken a little girl from the convent, and I try to look after all the children in the two houses as if they were my own." The house where she lives is as clean as scrubbing can make it. Even the two windowless cellar water-closets are whitewashed and odorless. But in the adjoining house, the families, in spite of her watchful care, break the stairs for firewood, cut the lead pipes out of the cellar water-closets, strew garbage and ashes in the yard, and break down the ashbin for firewood. They complained loudly of the house to the inspector, but denied personal responsibility for dirt, broken windows and dilapidation. Two tenants gave as reason

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for the incredible confusion, "We are just a-goin' to move"—the stock excuse of the shiftless and dirty.

Some of the black Portuguese have been here long enough to have steady work, to have brought their wives and families, and to have comfortably furnished homes. But the stories told here could be duplicated many times in the district. The nurses have difficulty in making the mothers understand and carry out instructions. The physician says that only because the babies are breast fed is the mortality as low as it is. The women do not seem capable of learning English, do not go out to do housework, and so do not have even the training which many immigrants get in that way. Perhaps more than any other race in Providence, the Portuguese need to be taught.

The white Portuguese make much better homes, are ambitious for their children, and make good citizens. They do not demand high sanitary standards, and seem quite content to do without the conveniences which an American family of the same wage standard would demand.

THE ITALIANS

Among the peasant classes of the Italians the problem is much the same. As a rule, they are fairly clean in their own rooms, however much they may abuse the public parts of a house and strew the yard with garbage. But after one has admired the most conspicuous thing in the tenement, the high, immaculate, white bed, with its lace-trimmed slips, sheets, and bedspread, and commences to look in the darker corners, too often is found a contrast. It is not lack of willingness, but lack of thoroughness. Italian women have industry, often poorly applied, but reasoning seems to be beyond them. They see no connection between a nursing-bottle full of tea-colored milk and the nervous restlessness of the baby. They see no reason why they should walk down four flights of stairs with a heavy garbage pail, when things can be thrown out of the window, and some one else sweeps up the yard. Though they bring it down, under coercion from the landlord, they cannot read the signs, even when printed in their own language, telling them not to mix swill with ashes. And if they could, where are they to put the swill when the small garbage keg usually provided is full?

It is rare that even the better class Italian women learn to speak English readily, though many of them are so intelligent that they can understand most of what is said, and can talk if not frightened nor embarrassed. In all of the visits made during inspection, only one woman failed to be courteous and interested in finding out what was wanted, and she only because she did not understand. The Health Department reports that it has little difficulty in getting the Italians to obey instructions when given, though remembering them till next time is different. Is it not probable that the Italian mother would respond

HOUSEKEEPING

with equal readiness to lessons in housekeeping and the common responsibilities of life in tenement houses?

THE POLES

Among the Polish people housekeeping has several factors which do not appear with other immigrants. Many of the mothers, even those with small children, work in the mills, either night or day. If they work at night, all of the family housework, cooking, cleaning, washing and sometimes sewing, is done in the daytime, after a few scant hours of sleep. If they work in the daytime, they hurry home at noon, hurry to get dinner for the family, hurry back to work, and do the housework early in the morning or late at night. With either plan they are overworked, tired, and often irritable or even brutal to the children. The children get well out of hand, because they can play truant from school, run the streets, or play without control, or, if small, they are left with a neighbor, or locked in the house. The more careful mothers have learned to take the small children to the day nursery, an added task in an already full day.

When the mother does not work in the mills, some families supplement their incomes by a kind of boarders peculiar to the Poles. Sometimes a whole family boards with another under this arrangement; sometimes it is girl or men "cousins"; sometimes both men and women make up the group. One family rents a tenement, keeping usually the worst room for their own bedroom. The others are let for so much a week, with a breakfast of coffee, and sometimes bread, included. For the other meals the boarders purchase their own supplies, which they either cook on the common stove, or pay a small sum to have cooked for them. Occasionally, in addition to washing the sheets, the mother does the personal wash for the boarders. Two, three, or even four families or groups, will share one common kitchen. The practice is at its worst when the boarders include both men and girls. It is a cheap way of living, as each person pays only from \$2 to \$3 per week. The only sanitary conveniences are the kitchen sink, with cold-water faucet, and usually a cellar water-closet. So the decencies of life are apt to be forgotten. The better class of families will, of course, not tolerate such conditions. In a number of tenements inspected there was an unfurnished room. In these cases the family said that they would rather get along on less than to have lodgers.

With all of these difficulties, most of the Polish families visited were fairly clean and seemed to take pride in decent surroundings. The dirty neighbor is not confined to any one race. The nurses from the day nursery say that there has been great improvement in the families they visit in the past five years. With teaching in good housekeeping and the necessity of sanitary conveniences, there is no reason

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why the standards of the lowest families should not be raised to those of the best.

THE OTHER NATIONALITIES

Not enough French-Canadian families were inspected to draw any conclusions, but it is believed from those seen that they would profit by housekeeping instruction. They are thrifty, great bargain hunters, and would appreciate learning the number of rooms and the sanitary conveniences they should be able to buy with their rent money.

Other nationalities—the English, Syrians, Armenians, Germans, American negroes—did not happen to live in any numbers in the inspection districts. Providence has many peoples who must be made into Americans.

And so the answer to the question, "What shall we do with the dirty neighbor, and with the untaught mother?" is "Lessons in housekeeping and home-making." We are doing something for the children in the schools and should do more. But also we must reach the mothers at home. It cannot be done officially nor by printed instructions; it must be done personally and by word of mouth. The district nurses have proved their value to community life, though the movement is not a generation old. Next must come the visiting housekeeper, who will do for the mother in her home-making what the nurse has already done for her and her baby. It is a task for the Housewife's League, for the Mothers' Club, for the settlements, and for the various women's societies of the churches. It is a problem of instruction, not of relief of poverty. We must Americanize the mothers, not let them drop behind or be dictated to by their children because of their lack of knowledge of a strange tongue and of strange customs.

VIII

Building and Management

Providence is a city built house by house. There are here no large operators who develop big tracts by building scores of houses at once. Some years ago a man came from New York to teach Providence the way to do this. He built one considerable group of three-deckers and then left town hastily. Among other things he would have taught, had he been successful, is that land overcrowding pays. He was so economical in the use of land that his development immediately attracts attention. The occupants of the houses he erected have no opportunity to get lonely. But he failed. So Providence continues to build house by house. In a few cases two houses are built at once. During the past five years there have been only thirteen instances of three houses, nine instances of four, three instances of five, and four instances of six, built as one operation.

As Providence is a city of small builders, so it is a city of small buyers, men who buy one house and live in it. As these buyers often are men of limited means who are seeking an investment as well as a home, their influence has been potent in causing the two-family and three-family house to become so prevalent. To some of the immigrant peoples this form of investment appeals strongly. They can see and touch what their money buys. They are sure it will not vanish. And the tenants from whom they get their income also are tangible, even if not substantial. Having started in this way, some of the more ambitious and capable go on, add other houses to the first, until they have become landlords of no little consequence.

Apparently Providence is building up a new landed class in place of the old American landowners. Ten or a dozen years ago there were several considerable estates of this kind in the poorer residence districts. Such estates, however, require constant supervision, close personal touch. This is irksome. So there was organized for the benefit of their owners a sort of clearing-house. This organization published a magazine in which they advertised, and it conducted an investigation bureau which looked up the character and financial ability of prospective tenants. But when a new manager took hold he found that the business was running at a loss. So he raised the dues. Then the members dropped out, until to-day scarcely one investigation a month is called for. During this decade the old estates have been breaking up, the houses are passing into the hands of those who live in them and who can give them personal supervision.

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OWNERSHIP WIDELY SCATTERED

So with the old estates breaking up and the new ones forming, the ownership of Providence dwellings at present is widely scattered. This does not mean that Providence is becoming more and more a city of home owners; perhaps it is not as much such a city as it was ten or twenty years ago, for only one family in a two or three-family house is in the owner class.

The owners, usually with small or no experience when they buy, and having but a small sum to invest, are likely to lay most stress upon the initial cost. Let the future take care of itself, the present is all they can swing, even with aid of the bank, the building and loan association or the private lender. So the builder, whose livelihood lies in building, meets the demands of his customers.

Probably few of the buyers realize what poor investments they have made, but believe their troubles are inherent in house-owning. And probably they do not realize the extent of their troubles, for, like the small farmer, they keep no accounts and do not charge themselves for their own time and labor or that of their families. This is what makes the three-decker possible. Especially among the Italians does it present an appearance of being a money maker, for among them the whole family devotes to it unpaid labor, though not more than is essential to secure tenants. The father does the odd jobs of repairing, the mother papers the walls, the children sweep out the rubbish.

WHAT TYPES PAY BEST

Among the real-estate men with whom we talked there was unanimity of opinion that the two-family house (one family above the other) is the best investment. Equally unanimous was the opinion that the frame three-decker is a poor investment. As to the cottage and the apartment house or large tenement house, opinions varied.

THE TWO-FAMILY HOUSE

The favor with which the two-family house is regarded is based upon the following points:

It occupies little more land than does the cottage.

Its foundations and roof cost little more than those of the cottage.

Consequently a second family can be housed with a comparatively small increase in the investment.

It is readily built so as to give each family nearly as complete privacy as it would enjoy in a single-family house. Each family may have its own entrance doors, its own cellar, even its own attic. In the Providence type of two-family house the yard is seldom divided, though it may be. As the owner frequently occupies one of the apartments, he both desires to use the yard himself and finds it less trouble

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to attend to grass mowing and other outside work than to persuade the other family, which has not the same pride in the appearance of the place, to do part of the work. In fact, when the owner does not live in the house trouble often develops. One landlord who owns several of these houses said that when tenants ask him who is to take care of the yard he always replies, "Fifty-fifty and up to you." "As a result," he added, "the grass around some of my houses is knee high, but that's no trouble of mine." A tenant of one of these houses said that he took his family away for a month last winter. While gone he received a peppery letter from his co-tenant who informed him that it was his duty to keep his furnace going whether at home or not, since it was impossible to heat one apartment when the other was like an ice-chest.

THE THREE-DECKER

So there are complications for the owner of a two-flatter, but they are multiplied for the owner of a three-decker. So long as the owner of the three-decker occupies one of these decks himself things may go fairly smoothly, though we met tenants who object to having the landlord around all the time. But apparently two's company, three's a crowd in a house as well as in other places, and when all three are tenants of an absentee landlord trouble is likely to begin. The commonest form seems to be for two of the families to combine against the third. Usually, it is said, the first and second floors unite against the top, for the top pays less rent and so is not in quite the same class. But the top has other advantages than a lighter rent. It has a floor which is number two's ceiling, and things dropped on that floor at selected moments may prove very annoying to those below. So it is difficult to keep all three decks rented at once, and the second deck is the most likely to be vacant. Such at least is the story of one real-estate man who manages a great deal of rental property.

Here, as in the two-family house, the common use of or responsibility for the yard is a cause of friction. And in the three-decker this cause is increased by common use of halls. So the saving in initial cost by putting three families on one lot, over one foundation and under one roof, is neutralized by more vacancies. Moreover, the common use of parts of the building by several families and that intangible something in the attitude of a family toward a dwelling which it shares with several others, results in larger repair bills and more rapid depreciation.

THE ONE-FAMILY COTTAGE

The one-family cottage is rated a poorer investment than the two-family house for two reasons:

The initial cost of land, foundations and roof is nearly as great.

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If a tenant moves out there may be a period when there is no income at all, while in the two-family house the second tenant's rent will pay carrying charges.

Somewhat neutralizing the first account is the experience that a family which has a house to itself will take greater pride in it, will keep it in better condition, and so reduce repair bills and depreciation. We asked several men who have charge of rental properties whether the second account might not be balanced by building two or three cottages and treating them as a single investment. All said, meditatively, that it might be so.

APARTMENT AND TENEMENT HOUSES

As for the large tenements, and especially those of the higher or apartment-house grade, the attitude of the real-estate men seemed to be one of optimism based upon hope, rather than experience. Here the saving in land cost is, of course, considerable, as there may be from six to a dozen families on a lot bought at the price considered right for a single-family house. Here, again, comes in the saving in foundations and roof. With the number of families increased, the union of two against one becomes impossible; instead there begins to appear the tendency, so noticeable in cities where large multiple dwellings are common, to ignore so far as possible one's co-tenants. With entrance doors off the same hall the only defense for one's privacy is not to know one's neighbors. But balancing these good investment points is greater cost of repairs, greater exactions from tenants, more rapid depreciation not only from use, but from the downward tendency of even a well-constructed building's reputation. This is well illustrated in a southern city where an investor erected in a good neighborhood some ten years ago what was then the most modern of apartment houses. He named it the Margaret Apartments. Within six years it was known as the "Maggie Flats" and his first tenants had already moved to newer and more modern buildings.

This migratory instinct of the apartment or tenement-house dweller is one of the factors to be reckoned on in considering such buildings from the investment point of view. It, of course, has its serious social side as well, but that we are not here considering. More pertinent is the damage done to floors and walls every time one tenant's furniture goes out and another's comes in. Providence real-estate men say the three-decker dweller is migratory. If the apartment and tenement house become common they will add a new word to their lexicon.

THE BEST PAYERS

But probably the houses that pay best of all are some of those old dwellings near Fox Point inhabited by groups of Brava men. Worth so little that they can scarcely depreciate, costing little for repairs since repairs are seldom made, they bring in a large revenue from



Row houses on Benefit Street



New Apartment House, Irving Avenue



New tenement house, Arthur and Atwells Avenues



Rear of new tenement house at corner of Arthur and Atwells Avenues. The court is filled with porches, darkening the rooms. If a similar building is erected next door the rooms will get almost no light.

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their many inhabitants. But the owners who get large returns on these investments are those who got in on the ground floor, inherited the houses or bought them when they were cheap. The builders of good new houses or those who buy old houses at a value based on the income cannot hope to share in the harvest.

WHAT IS A FAIR RETURN?

Apparently a fair return on dwelling house property in Providence is approximately the same as it is in other cities, five or six per cent net. This, of course, is irrespective of such speculative factors as a considerable rise in the value of land. But this five or six per cent is really earned, if it is earned, that is, if repairs are made as needed and depreciation written off. Much more can sometimes be taken out of a property by letting it run down, but that is not income, it is subtraction from principal. To get five or six per cent means a knowledge of the business, plus constant and careful supervision.

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Cost of building at present is abnormal, and it is difficult to learn what it was before prices went soaring. Figures taken from the Building Inspector's memoranda during the years 1911, 1912 and 1913 show such wide variations for buildings of the same number of families that they form no basis. Nor is there any data showing how much these buildings have deteriorated. Probably, however, Providence buildings go through much the same decline as those of Boston and other Massachusetts cities where studies have been made. One, made at the instance of the Boston Chamber of Commerce,* based on the bids of five contractors, showed that the cost of a house of other than frame construction would be increased only from 5.8 per cent for brick veneer on studding to 9.1 per cent for a ten-inch hollow brick wall and to 13 per cent for a solid twelve-inch brick wall. Another study showed that the annual charge-off, with interest at 4 per cent, and the annual cost for repairs and painting, for a frame three-decker costing \$6,500 would be \$628.40; while that for a house of the same size, but of second-class construction and costing \$7,500, would be only \$498.50.

Last year Brookline** became interested in the same question. It compared its wooden three-deckers with brick dwellings erected in Salem and at Woodbourne and found that when depreciation is figured in the frame three-decker is the poorest investment.

Such studies as these have not stopped the building of frame tenement houses in Massachusetts, but they have greatly increased the

* The Prevention of Fire in Boston. Report of the Committee on Fire Prevention, of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, 1911.

** The Wooden Apartment House Question in Brookline.

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number of towns in which such construction is prohibited, and they have made the banks and other money lenders more and more cautious about putting their funds into such investments.

THE QUESTION BEFORE PROVIDENCE

In one if not both of these ways the question is sure to come before Providence in the near future. The banks, co-operative and other, the building and loan associations, the estates which loan on dwelling-house property, are what make possible the present types of buildings. A representative of one of these institutions told us that he had never thought to inquire as to the condition of a building after his loan had been repaid. It is from these institutions that Italians, Poles, Portuguese and Jews get a considerable part of the purchase-price of their houses. Consequently they can exert a very great influence, not only over American buyers and builders, but over those of the alien peoples as well. They have a responsibility for helping to make Providence as fine a city as it can be, a responsibility to those who borrow by aiding the latter to make good investments, and also a responsibility to their own stockholders by seeing to it that this year's business does not jeopardize next year's. Should they not encourage a type of dwelling that will lessen the hazard of conflagration as well as protect existing values?

It is a commonplace now to hear wonder-tales of thrift on the part of some of the immigrant peoples. A man buys a house worth thousands for a few hundred dollars of his own. The rest is loaned him. In a few years he has paid off the debt and is perhaps buying another house. How does he do it? Listen to the story of how he packs the house with tenants, of how he racks the property. And when he builds the new house, does he reserve adequate open spaces? Does he increase the fire hazard for other buildings upon which there are loans? Does his operation increase or decrease the tax burdens of the community? These are not questions to be answered offhand. Those who loan him the money not only have a part in the responsibility, but they help to pay the bills. Their interest does not cease when the loan is returned.

ARE TENEMENT RENTALS LOWER?

At this point some one may question whether land overcrowding and tall tenements are not necessary if dwellings are to be provided for the wage-earner at rents within his means. We call attention to the following figures taken from the schedules made out in the inspection districts. These indicate that in the districts where land is most overcrowded, where there is the greatest number of families per house, rents incline to be higher, not lower, than in the other districts. There are considerable variations in the rent per room in each district, for

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here, again, is the lack of uniformity characteristic of Providence. This variation is complicated by the inclusion of attic rooms in some apartments. Such apartments have been omitted in the figures below, as have those where a bathroom or some other extra has been the apparent occasion for a higher rent. In district 1 B a pantry should be added to the number of rooms given in many instances. But even with this extra the rent per room is comparatively low. In a few instances the rent of front and rear apartments in the same building has been included as a matter of interest.

DISTRICT 1 A, NEAR FOX POINT AVERAGE 3.15 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
20	\$43.00	\$2.15
13	35.00	2.70
4	10.00	2.50
5	12.00	2.50
5	11.00	2.20
3	7.00	2.33
3	6.00	2.00
6	9.00	1.50
3	8.00	2.66

DISTRICT 1 B, NEAR INDIA POINT AVERAGE 2.98 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
3	\$5.00	\$1.66
5	8.00	1.66
3	5.00	1.83
3	7.00	2.33
4	7.00	1.75
4	10.00	2.50
3	8.00	2.66
5	11.00	2.20
4	9.00	2.25

DISTRICT 2 A, ATWELLS AVENUE AND McAVOY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD AVERAGE 3.57 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
4	\$6.00	\$1.50
3	8.50	2.83
4	10.00	2.50
5	12.00	2.40
4	11.00	2.75
4	12.00	3.00
3	6.50	2.16
4	14.00	3.50
3	7.50	2.50
3	6.00	2.00

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DISTRICT 2 B, RIDGE AND GESLER STREETS NEIGHBORHOOD AVERAGE 3.61 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
5	\$14.00	\$2.80
5	16.00	3.20
3	8.00	2.66
3	9.00	3.00
4	10.00	2.50
5	12.00	2.50
6	14.00	2.33
4	11.00	2.75
3	12.00	4.00
5	15.00	3.00
4	9.00	2.25
6	16.00	2.66
4	12.00	3.00

DISTRICT 2 C, ATWELLS AVENUE AND ALBRO STREET NEIGHBORHOOD AVERAGE 4.14 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
5	\$14.00	\$2.80
4	12.00	3.00
5 Front	15.00	3.00
5 Rear	12.00	2.40
7	25.00	3.57
6	16.00	2.66
4 Rear	10.00	2.50
4 Front	14.00	3.50
5	16.00	3.20
4	15.00	3.75

DISTRICT 3, CHALKSTONE AVENUE AND GODDARD STREET NEIGHBORHOOD AVERAGE 2.61 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
4	\$11.00	\$2.75
3	6.00	2.00
3 Front	8.00	2.66
3 Rear	7.00	2.33
4	8.00	2.00
4	15.00	3.75
4	9.00	2.25

DISTRICT 4, SHIP AND ELM STREETS NEIGHBORHOOD AVERAGE 2.16 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
4	\$14.00	\$3.50
4	12.00	3.00
4	8.00	2.00
3	8.00	2.66
6	18.00	3.00
6	15.00	2.50
5	14.00	2.80
5	12.00	2.50
7	18.00	2.57
7	21.00	3.00

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DISTRICT 5, CHARLES STREET AND BRANCH AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD

AVERAGE 3 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
5	\$12.00	\$2.40
6 Front	15.00	2.50
4 Rear	10.00	2.50
4	9.00	2.25
5	10.00	2.00
6	17.00	2.83
5	9.00	1.80
3	8.00	2.66

DISTRICT 6, MANTON AVENUE AND JULIAN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

AVERAGE 2.76 FAMILIES PER HOUSE

No. of Rooms	Rent per Month	Rent per Room
5	\$6.50	\$1.30
5	9.00	1.80
4	9.00	2.25
6	11.00	1.83
4	10.00	2.25
6	10.00	1.66
4	7.00	1.75
3	7.00	2.33
2 Second Floor	6.00	3.00
3 Second Floor	7.00	2.33
5 Third Floor	10.00	2.00

Another method produces similar results. The rent per room in three-deckers and in larger tenement houses is higher, rather than lower, than the rent per room in smaller houses.

DISTRICT 1 A

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$2.50	\$2.15	\$2.50	\$2.00
1.50	2.50	2.50	2.33
1.75	2.20	2.25	2.00
1.71			2.25
2.50			4.00
			2.83
			2.66

DISTRICT 1 B

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$1.75	\$1.83	\$2.50	\$2.66
2.50	2.75	2.00	2.00
	2.80	3.50	1.66
	2.00	3.00	2.12
	2.33	2.75	2.33
	2.50	2.66	
	2.16	2.25	
	1.50		

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DISTRICT 2 A

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$2.00	\$2.33	\$2.33	\$3.00
1.66	2.40	2.75	2.70
		2.40	3.75
		4.00	3.37
		4.33	2.25
		2.87	2.62
		3.00	
		2.00	

DISTRICT 2 B

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$2.50	\$2.33	\$2.33	\$3.00
	2.40	2.75	2.70
	3.00	2.40	3.75
	2.83	4.00	3.37
	2.66	4.33	2.25
		2.87	2.75
		3.00	2.62
		2.00	

DISTRICT 2 C

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
	\$2.66	\$3.00	\$2.80
	3.20	2.20	3.00
	2.50	3.57	3.12
	2.20	2.85	3.25
		2.60	3.00
		3.20	3.50
			2.57
			3.75
			3.33

DISTRICT 3

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$2.33	\$2.00	\$3.25	\$2.66
	2.50	3.50	2.33
	2.25	3.75	2.25
	3.00	3.60	2.20
	2.75	3.75	

DISTRICT 4

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$2.40	\$2.00	\$1.60	\$3.50
2.00	3.50	3.00	3.00
3.12	2.66	2.40	2.20
1.66	3.25		2.40
2.66	2.80		2.50
2.16	2.83		2.25
	2.42		
	2.40		
	3.00		

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DISTRICT 5

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$1.40	\$2.25	\$3.00	\$1.60
2.08	2.50	2.40	2.40
1.80	2.25	2.50	3.00
	2.00	2.80	2.80
	2.80	2.83	2.50
	2.20	2.33	2.12
	2.66	1.80	2.20
			2.25
			1.80
			1.75
			2.00

DISTRICT 6

1-Family Houses	2-Family Houses	3-Family Houses	Tenement Houses
\$1.30	\$1.80	\$2.25	\$2.00
2.33	2.00	2.50	2.25
	2.50	2.20	2.33
	2.33	2.00	1.60
		2.33	
		3.00	

Of course, such figures as these are merely indicative. They tell nothing of the condition in which a building is kept or of the floor space per room or of the location of rooms, except in the few instances where front and rear apartments in tenement houses have been noted. They do show, however, that with generally poorer accommodations, with an increase of conditions which Providence should view with concern, the larger dwellings do not furnish lower rentals.

IX

Surrounding Communities

In its relations with its surrounding communities Providence has unusual need for foresight and an unusual variety of opportunities for its exercise. As the Metropolitan Park Commission discovered, Providence cannot be sufficient unto itself. Its street system, its water system, its sewer system must be planned with regard to communities outside its borders. Otherwise there will develop misadjustments which will not only cause great expense, but, even more important, poorer results when the misadjustments are finally corrected so far as possible. And meanwhile there will be the dissatisfaction and ill feeling that are inevitable consequences of a poor job. How intimate the relations are between Providence and the surrounding towns and cities was illustrated last July, when the Town Council of East Providence conferred with the City Council over the re-routing of the street car lines in Exchange Place.

Other foreshadowings of future action are given by the present arrangement between Providence and Pawtucket in regard to sewage, and that between Providence and Cranston in regard to water supply. The central city cannot afford to have Pawtucket dump its sewage into the Seekonk River. Soon it will find that it cannot afford to have the mill towns along its other valleys follow this old barbarous custom. Providence now has reservoirs and pumping-station in Cranston and is impounding the waters of distant towns. The time is coming when other populous areas in the Metropolitan District will seek water supplies and find none because the larger city, having felt its need first, has pre-empted them. Yet even from the most selfish point of view, Providence cannot remain indifferent to the wants of its neighbors. The interests of the whole district are bound up together. Now, before piecemeal building has made a good system difficult, if not impossible, is the time to plan what should be done in order that each piece of work as it is undertaken may fit into the final plan.

As with the public services, so with housing. The parts of the Metropolitan District are not a series of unrelated areas, but are parts of one whole. To adopt good housing regulations for Providence, while none are adopted by the other parts of the district, will benefit Providence at the expense of the rest. For those who build badly, whose thought is only of the present and not at all of the future, will turn their full attention to the other cities and towns. It was fear of such concentrated attention that moved Brookline to prohibit frame three-deckers after some of the nearby towns had done so. Already Cranston is suffering from lack of any regulation.



Court off Harris Avenue. Every room light



Court Houses in the midst of a large block. Deserted House in the foreground



A Four-family House in a Mill Town



An Italian Farmhouse. Near the Hughesdale Post Office, Johnston

SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

THE EDGES OF THE CITY

Providence has an unusual variety of opportunities to exercise its foresight because of the unusual variety of conditions along the edges of the city.

To the north lies Pawtucket, a city of more than 55,000 people. Already its built-up areas are in spots touching those of the metropolis. In Pawtucket the same conditions as those we found in Providence are already fully developed. It now needs housing regulation fully as much as does the larger city.

To the northwest and west lie North Providence and Johnston. Along the border between them and the metropolis there are large areas of undeveloped land, broken here and there by old mill villages, like Manton, Dyerville and Merino; or by an occasional newer development, like that about Neutaconkanut Hill Park. Here is the great opportunity to build the future city on a better basis than the old. This opportunity has already been seen by the City Plan Commission. But even here there are some bad spots, land already platted, a few houses of bad type erected, which makes more difficult the planning of the rest and which set lower standards for the neighborhood than should prevail.

To the southwest and south lies the city of Cranston, composed of suburban districts, old mill villages and towns, and large areas of open farm and woodland. It has so many problems of its own that we shall treat of it more at length.

To the east, across the Seekonk River and the bay, lies East Providence, a town which, like Cranston, calls for more detailed discussion.

On the open edges of the city, both within and without its borders, developments that are or may be of the greatest significance to the future city are taking place. Here are many scattered holdings of people of the immigrant races. The Portuguese, who do little building within the older districts, build homes out here where they may have gardens or farms that will produce an income. Many of the second generation of Swedes and the other northern peoples also have been drawn to these open spaces. But again it is the Italians who command the most attention. Within the city limits, as around Silver Lake; in growing but not yet closely built parts of Cranston, as north of Auburn and near Knightsville, they have tracts of land which they cultivate. Far from the city, as in Johnston, they have bought farms from which they produce an income after American predecessors had failed. How they do it is a question that merits study, for, as with housing property, the fact that a farm to-day yields more than is put into it is not a complete answer to the question put in the name of the welfare of the community.

But the fact that these peoples are moving away from the crowded districts, that they show in this tangible fashion their desire

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for space and sun, are things not to be neglected by those concerned for the future of the city. The grape arbors that are becoming so noticeable an adornment of the farmhouses in the rural regions about Providence are tokens of a change as fundamental in its significance as the changing ownership of city lands.

THE TOWN OF EAST PROVIDENCE

Reached by three car lines from Providence, and with large tracts of vacant land within the five-cent fare, East Providence is building up to suburban homes, though part of its population works in local mills and other industries. As yet there is a return current night and morning, because some of the mill workers prefer to live in Providence and because of lack of vacant dwellings in East Providence.

It is a district of modest homes, many of them owned for a generation or more, and bought to be lived in, not for rental returns. Built almost entirely of wood, the houses in the different villages which make up the town of East Providence differ mainly in freshness of paint, care of yards, and pride in fences, sidewalks and tree-lined streets. Some are weatherworn and dingy, some fresh and spruce. Some are elaborate in size and design, but the impression is of a residential town of modest story-and-a-half cottages and two-family houses inhabited by families with comfortable, steady incomes, thrift and self-respect. To the north lie the shops and works along the rivers, to the south the summer resorts along the bay. In the middle is the Watchemoket District, to which in common usage the name of East Providence is confined, as it is the oldest and dominating settlement of the town.

East Providence lies in a long narrow strip between the Seekonk River and Narragansett Bay on the west and the state line on the east; from Pawtucket on the north to Crescent Park on the south. Through its seven miles of length and three of width are scattered many villages: Phillipsdale, Rumford, Hunt's Mills, Riverside, Crescent Park, and many smaller settlements bearing names known locally, but not on the map. With a total population in 1915 of 18,584,* a large part is still farm land, even where the maps show platted streets. The stakes and other markings of land development companies show where streets will be. In some of the outlying districts, water mains, gas and electricity have been put in. Except in the central part of East Providence, paving, drainage, sewers and sidewalks are left to the future.

* State Census.

SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

In his annual report for the year ending September 30, 1915, the building inspector lists the following permits for dwellings:

50	1 story
37	1½ story
41	2 stories
16	2½ stories
1	3½ stories
<hr style="width: 10%; margin-left: 0;"/>	
145	

Barns and shops changed into dwellings.....	3
Summer cottages	15
Additions and alterations	120

ONE AND TWO-FAMILY HOUSES PREDOMINATE

These figures are indicative of the types of houses all over the town. In general there seems a slight preponderance of the one-story or one-story-and-a-half cottage, detached or semi-detached. Next come the two-family dwellings. There are some three-deckers and an occasional block of tenements. But in no part of the town is there extensive land overcrowding. Most of the lots are of good size, and only occasionally is there a rear dwelling. The standard lot is 40 to 50 by 100 to 150 feet, and in the best sections a house frequently stands on two lots.

In the sections which are now being developed by land sales of various kinds, the lots usually are small, 40 by 50 to 50 by 50 feet, the intention being to sell two lots for a dwelling. Although the signboards with their alluring legends offer "lots from \$49 to \$129," it is only the unsophisticated buyer who does not calculate that his initial cost for his land will be double, and that he must later pay for sewers, sidewalks, pavements and, in many places, for drainage.

The fifty one-story houses reported as built in 1915 are in these newer districts. They are put up usually by Italians or Portuguese as shelters until the family savings have paid for the lots and permit of something better. There is a trade in "ready cut" houses that may be put up at odd times by the wage-earning buyer of the lots.

Apparently East Providence offers a very desirable place for suburban development other than the inexpensive homes of small wage-earners. While there are no mansions, there are fairly expensive homes in sufficient numbers to make the visitor wonder why there are not more. Closer inquiry and analysis reveal some of the reasons.

The water-front district is subject to smoke and other nuisances from the railroads and works along the river. Several districts are swampy or wet, so that in addition to sewers an extensive drainage system is necessary. Some desirable sections already have been exploited by land-development companies who seek buyers among those Italians and Portuguese who are looking for cheap sites. These peo-

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

ple buy on a narrow margin, have no money to spend on extras, little interest in community amenities, and an aversion to taxes.

There has been no strong community effort to counteract these drawbacks. Barrington parkway is projected and partially built along the east shore, but there is no other attempt at planned development or the protection of residential districts. Mills and works locate where they will; sewers and paved streets are extended but slowly; house connections with sewers are not compulsory,* and in all parts of the town are unsanitary and unsightly privies.**

To the south attractive homes line Pawtucket Avenue and some of the side streets, but even here the signs advertising \$49 and \$129 lots herald the future.

Three golf clubs on the north and two country clubs on the south are proofs of the possibilities of the town, and indicate that with careful planning and control, East Providence should develop into a very desirable residence section.

THE VILLAGES

Phillipsdale and Rumford, with the amusement park at Hunt's Mills, are next to the Pawtucket line. Phillipsdale lies along the Seekonk River, which gives water as well as railroad transportation to its mills. The two largest are the Glenlyon Dye Works and the American Electrical Works; but four other smaller works give diversified employment. Both of the larger works own tenant houses. Yet there are sixteen extra street cars run as specials night and morning to carry a large number of employees to their homes in East Providence or Providence. The Dye Works has tenements for about one hundred families. These are neat, well-kept houses, mostly frame, though a few of the newer ones are built of brick and attractively designed. The Electrical Works has fewer houses, all frame, less attractive and well kept, especially as to sanitary conveniences. There are some private houses, one general store, a school and a church. With so much open country nearby and its diversified industries, Phillipsdale offers opportunity for the development of an industrial town along the most modern lines.

Rumford and Hunt's Mills lie to the east of Phillipsdale on the Ten Mile River. Only the resident knows where one stops and the other begins. Large lots, or acres, surround most of the comfortable, unpretentious homes which are typical of a region that is changing from farms to suburb. The Rumford Works has isolated itself by the purchase of a large tract of land. It owns six tenant houses, but most of the employees provide homes for themselves. Around

* The Town Council has been given some power by the Legislature of 1916.

** See report of the Health Officer, 1915.

SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

the amusement park at Hunt's Mills cluster a few houses, but the region is still largely rural.

THE WATCHEMOKET DISTRICT

In the center lies the Watchemoket District, commonly called East Providence. It consists of the most closely built-up part of the town. Along the river front are the railroad, works, coal pockets, oyster packing plants, oil tanks and shipping industries. A traffic and a railroad bridge connect it with Providence. The business center radiates along Taunton and Warren avenues from the end of Washington Bridge, but stores are small, as most of the shopping is done in Providence. Between Waterman Avenue on the north, Warren Avenue on the south, Pawtucket Avenue on the east, and the Seekonk River on the west, the area is fairly solidly but not closely built up. Here and there is a section, a few blocks, of attractive, larger houses with tree-lined streets and green yards, or of smaller cottages, well painted and showing pride of ownership. Other neighborhoods bear the impress of the tenant, shabby and run down.

The main streets are well paved and sewered and have good sidewalks and curbing; but the side streets are dirt roads with side paths often impassable. Water and sewers are under the control of the administrative board of the Watchemoket Fire District, a peculiar sort of a vending company for these public utilities, whose officers are elected by the tax-payers who live in the district. The division of control between town and district officials seems to result in no one being especially concerned in compelling the installation of sewer-connected toilets and the abolishment of outdoor privies, unless it can be done at a profit, except the Health Officer, and he is without authority.

THE TOWN'S SLUM

The only slum of the town lies along the river front. As an example of all possible bad conditions in a small area it is perfect. On Valley and Water streets are from fifty to sixty old houses, sometimes three to a lot. Some are built of scraps, all are in bad repair, dingy and dirty, and interspersed with saloons. Here gather in the Crow's Nest and in Goat Alley, black Portuguese, American negroes and shiftless whites, many well known to the police. Dirty kitchens, overcrowded bedrooms, privies with sagging shelters and overflowing vaults, streets deep with coal dust and ashes, add each their quota to the squalor. Work on the docks is irregular, so there is ample time as well as inclination on the part of the denizens for loafing and for sleeping in the sun. Along the river runs the railroad, overhead the bridge meets the business streets. Valley and Water streets are rarely visited by outsiders, except the nurse and the policeman—both of whom find frequent occasion for their calls.

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

In the southern end of the town lie Riverside and Crescent Park, connected with East Providence village by Pawtucket Avenue, with its comfortable homes and trolley line.

Riverside is a little more than seven miles from Market Square. It is made up of both summer homes and the permanent homes of men whose work permits the distance and the ten-cent fare. Many of them are motormen or other employees of the car lines. The houses are piped for water, but, except for a few private drains, there are no sewers. Because of the bay it is a pleasant residence district which should be protected from a development that will ruin its possibilities.

THE CITY OF CRANSTON

From the southern city line of Providence to the Pawtuxet River on the south, from Narragansett Bay to the Pocasset River on the west, lies the built-up portion of the city of Cranston—a crescent-shaped suburb. Ever since 1868, when the larger city absorbed a good-sized section, annexation or consolidation has been discussed, but except in the case of the land taken for Roger Williams Park, no definite action has been taken. On the Pawtuxet River are the water works of Providence; its mains extend through the city of Cranston, to which it supplies water as it does to its own inhabitants. The sewage-disposal problem is the same for both cities. Highways, streets, trolley lines and railroads serve the needs of both.

It was incorporated as the city of Cranston in 1910, with a mayor, a city treasurer, an overseer of the poor and a common council. It covers an area of thirty square miles, with a wide variety of suburbs, manufacturing centers, mill towns, villages and farm land. More than half of Cranston is farm and woodland, though houses are extending along the highways into the open country, and bringing additional problems of health, sanitation and police protection.

Growth is rapid, both in population and in industries. The census of 1900 counted 13,343 inhabitants; that of 1910, 21,107. The estimated population in 1916 is 30,000. This is based upon the new registration lists, which show an increase of about 500 voters over the 5,000 previously listed. Italians are moving into all parts of the city, and, as a rule, promptly qualify for voting as property owners. While no figures are available as to the Italian vote, it is a factor in all elections.

As diversified as the villages, mill towns, factory centers and residential districts which it includes, are Cranston's industries. Through the center of the eastern section runs the railroad, lined on either side with large factories and shops, old and new. In the open spaces are large market gardens where long rows of blue-aproned, bent-backed Italian women move like pieces of machinery as they weed or hoe. Construction work on the interurban trolleys, as well as permanent work for motormen and conductors, furnish another kind

SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

of employment. The building trades are busy with new houses, factories and mills. On the west edge of the settled portion are the two old mill towns of the Cranston Print Works with their rows of tenant houses, all built from the same pattern fifty or more years ago, now surrounded by the new cottages and tenements of the Italian frontier.

LACK OF REGULATION

There is a curious lack of public service utilities and of the exercise of the usual powers of city control in Cranston, despite its rapidly increasing population and industries. Though hundreds of new houses are being erected in every direction, there are no building code and no building inspection. Each man may build as he pleases with no regard for neighbors or community. Nominally, he must get a permit before commencing construction, but there is no one to enforce even this meagre provision. If he chooses to erect a six-family tenement house in the middle of wide, open spaces, or if he prefers a shack for a shelter while he cultivates his crops, his own pocketbook is the only thing to consult. There are no sewers, so his sanitary conveniences consist of a privy or a cesspool. Practically all the built-up sections are piped for Providence water, but if he chooses he may dig a well and take his own risk of typhoid fever. The Superintendent of Health draws \$400 as salary from the city. For this he must look after thirty square miles and thirty thousand inhabitants. Needless to say, constructive health and sanitary reforms are practically out of the question for lack of time. Excepting for the installation of fire hydrants, protection against conflagration, always serious with frame houses, is left to volunteer companies. The thrifty Italians are commencing to use concrete and terra-cotta blocks, not only for foundations, but for walls of houses of one, two or three stories.

Cranston's real troubles are in the future. At present it is, in general, a pleasant community of one and two-family houses set on lots 40 or 50 feet wide by 100 to 150 feet deep, which bear plain evidences of thrift and home ownership. In some of the older sections houses are dingy and in need of fresh paint and minor repairs, but the general impression is of a progressive, thriving community of comfortable, American standard homes. Here and there the practiced eye sees indication of undesirable tendencies in lot overcrowding, in poor types of tenement houses, in lack of sanitary conveniences. But there is little that cannot be eliminated or prevented if taken care of now. Cranston is already too large to leave community interests without control and to allow unrestrained liberty in matters which affect one's neighbors.

While a detailed study of Cranston was not made, general inspections and talks with the city clerk, merchants and the district nurse gave the following information:

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

Starting at the northeast central section, next the Providence city line, Arlington and Auburn have the same types of development that are general in the contiguous district which was annexed in 1868. One, two and three-family frame houses prevail. They have fair-sized rooms, water piped in, and yards with grass plots or gardens. But they have the settled, shabby look of middle age, in vivid contrast with the newer, smarter houses in the adjoining additions of Eden Park, Auburn Plateau, South Auburn and Edgewood.

Throughout this section the census man would say that the population is American with a foundation of the older Irish-American settlers, reinforced by the American-born children of Germans, Swedes and Italians. Small colonies of Armenians, white Portuguese and Italians speak their own languages and share little in the community life.

HOW CRANSTON IS CHANGING

The new industrial establishments which are coming into Auburn are changing conditions in their immediate vicinity. There are larger tenement houses and a more shifting population. The trolleys bring many workmen each day from Providence who spend no money in the town and have no interest in it, yet are a part of its problems.

To the south, along the line of the trolley in Pontiac Avenue, are a large number of new, modern houses, built within the past ten years. Through the neighborhood are Swedish families, who formerly worked in the market gardens. Now this work is largely done by gangs of Italian women, for some of whom wagons are sent each morning to neighboring settlements. From seven in the morning until five at night they may be seen in the fields as they stoop over the rows of celery, beans and peas. With their numerous, full petticoats, bright handkerchiefs on heads, tanned necks and faces, swinging hips and smiling eyes, they reproduce the pictures of peasant life in their native country.

Just to the south of Roger Williams Park a small group of mill houses, which years ago were the isolated village of the "turkey red" mills, are a signpost showing the growth of Providence. Now they are surrounded by modern suburban houses, so new that the lumber still smells. On the east are the pleasant homes of Edgewood, a daytime shelter of women and children only, since almost to a man the fathers go to work in Providence.

South of Edgewood lies the old-time shipping village of Pawtuxet, which claims a greater age than that of Providence. It is a self-contained, self-respecting village with many old homes along the mouth of the river and the shore of the bay. Boat building and other industries of the water are its principal interests. Arlington and Pawtuxet lie at the opposite ends of the crescent which make up the closely settled parts of Cranston. Yet even in this district there are many stretches of farm land, woodland, market gardens and large plats, not yet cut up into lots.

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To the west, on Oaklawn Avenue and Cranston Street, the villages of Wayland Park and Meshanticut Park are largely owned by American families who are trying to prevent the invasion of foreigners. The two mill villages of the Cranston Print Works, one on Dyer Avenue, one off Park Avenue, no longer house hands from the mills exclusively, but rents are lower to the old tenants of more than ten years' residence than to the new comers. In the Italian colonies near by may be seen nearly every kind of a house for which congested Federal Hill has set the example, even to a six-family tenement standing alone in the midst of open spaces. One four-family house with concrete first story and brick second story, seems to cover its lot to the side lines and to leave scant space at the rear. Three-family tenements and cottages stand side by side.

In Thornton, formerly almost a replica of an English village with cottages and gardens, the Italian invasion has begun. Along the main road the tenement houses march as closely together as on Atwells Avenue.

In every settlement of Cranston are evidences of the crying need for a housing law and its strict enforcement if the mistakes of other communities are to be barred out. It is at the point where it can choose whether it will permit the development of evils to be painfully corrected at some time in the future, or whether it will develop normally into a city of pleasant, healthful, American standard homes.

X

Some Mill Towns

Three streams empty into Narragansett Bay at Providence. Up the valleys of these streams lie a series of mill villages, some of them once isolated, self-contained little communities, but now merging into one another, so that in the not far-distant future they will form long unbroken lines stretching out from the parent city. The mills were located along these streams because of the water-power. The villages were built by the mill owners, not from choice, but from necessity. In the old days before trolley lines followed all the main highways the workers had to live within walking distance of the mill. To-day the custom of building dwellings is continued by many of the mills for a variety of reasons, though the management usually claims that it regards them as a source of work and worry with which it would gladly dispense. In few if any cases do the mill houses earn a fair return upon the investment. Where they do show a fair return the houses usually were built many years ago and are still valued at the cost of building at that time. To-day, with a trolley service which connects the towns with each other and with Providence, mill workers can go longer distances to their homes. This ability to get to and from the city and other centers of employment and recreation has led to a considerable amount of private home-building and to speculative building, so now many of the mill towns have private developments on their borders.

SEWERS AND WATER

With this growth in population have come community problems that call for tactful handling, but are so important that they must be handled in some way soon. For these long, narrow towns have become virtually a part of Providence, and they must be made and kept at least sanitary, not only for their own sakes, but for that of the metropolis as well. At present their contributions to Providence by way of the waters of the Blackstone and the Woonasquatucket rivers are not such as the city can receive with pleasure or safety. Some of the newest of them, as the new village at Esmond, are sewered and the houses have indoor water-closets. The older villages still depend upon privies. Despite agitation for better sanitation conditions are still far from what they should be. Perhaps the investigators of the Federal Public Health Service may secure an improvement. The West Warwick Town Council last July had presented to it a mass of testimony that should cause shame to the representatives of any civilized community. The Crawford Street brook was



Old mill houses at Esmond. Rent \$1.20 a week



New semi-detached house for Foremen at Esmond



Mill Houses in Greystone



Mill Houses in Crompton

SOME MILL TOWNS

said to be used as an outlet for cesspools and privy vaults; the overflow of a cesspool back of the Alice building in the heart of the business section of Arctic Center was said to flow into the gutters of Central and Quidnick streets.

These little villages, lying so close to each other and all on the watershed of Providence, are, from the point of sewage disposal, parts of one unit, the Metropolitan District. Each cannot solve its problem by itself. Consequently, the sooner a plan is made for the whole district, the better for them and for the district as a whole.

As regards water supply the situation is better, since each mill must have water; and some find the task of supplying at least their own houses comparatively easy. In the three villages most thoroughly studied—Esmond, Berkeley and River Point—the company-owned houses had water within the dwellings. This problem, however, like the sewage problem, is too large for the mills to handle individually and should be made the subject of a study based upon the needs of the whole Metropolitan District, taking into account not only present but future needs.

THE PEOPLES OF THE MILL VILLAGES

The populations of the valley towns contain the same elements we found in Providence, except that there are few Jews. In Esmond, for instance, the mill employees were said by the management to be

French-Canadian	28½	per cent.
English	23	per cent.
Italian	18½	per cent.
American	16	per cent.
Polish	4½	per cent.
Irish	3½	per cent.
Portuguese	1½	per cent.
Russian	1	per cent.
Miscellaneous	3½	per cent.

In the other towns the proportions are different, but the same elements are present. Forty per cent of the mill employees at Esmond live in the mill houses, and more would do so in all probability if more houses were available. At the time we were there only two houses were vacant. This proportion is not to be applied to all the villages for two reasons at least: First, many of the Esmond houses are new, their rooms are large and they are equipped not only with running water, but with indoor water-closets. Second, other villages have much larger private developments in their immediate neighborhood. A few of the mills on the borders of Providence have no tenants in their houses, or they rent the houses both to their own workers and to others, so they have ceased to be characteristic mill developments.

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

TYPES OF DWELLINGS

To one who passes through the mill towns without stopping to inspect them in detail, nearly all present an attractive appearance, the older ones especially, with their groups of comfortable-looking frame or brick houses shaded by tall old trees. There is a great variety in the houses of the different villages, but considerable uniformity within a village. So each village possesses an individuality that is lacking in its dwellings. Yet for all this variety in appearance, the houses fall into four classes:

Single-family detached cottages.

Single-family semi-detached or double cottages.

Four-family houses.

Six or more family cottages.

Nearly all of these are a story and attic or two stories in height. The proportion of each varies considerably in the different villages. In some of the older ones the first class is well represented, but it is the second that has evidently most commended itself, as it is found everywhere and especially in the newer developments. The larger houses, though they may seem economical when cost of construction alone is considered, evidently do not bear out their promise, as they are usually in worse disrepair than their smaller neighbors, and their yards and outbuildings in less cleanly condition. Here, as in the city, it is evident that common use of halls, yards and other facilities results in greater wear and tear and in greater untidiness and disorder.

As the rents in the multiple buildings are usually a little lower than in the single-family houses, they are more apt to be occupied by recently arrived immigrants or by the more shiftless; those who have had time to find themselves and those who have a pride in their homes moving into single-family houses as vacancies occur, so but few of these smaller dwellings are tenantless. In River Point the eight single-family houses were all occupied and their tenants were emphatic in expressing their preference for this type of dwelling.

In Esmond nearly all the dwellings are of the double or semi-detached cottage type. In River Point there are two groups of mill houses. Those in the first group are divided as follows:

No. Families per House	Total Houses	Total Families	Type of House
1	7	7	1-Family, detached
2	50	100	1-Family, semi-detached
3	3	9	
4	11	44	2-Family, semi-detached
6	5	30	3-Family, semi-detached
	<hr/> 76	<hr/> 190	

SOME MILL TOWNS

SECOND GROUP

No. Families per House	Total Houses	Total Families	Type of House
1	1	1	1-Family, detached
2	22	44	1-Family, semi-detached
4	4	16	2-Family, semi-detached
	<hr/> 27	<hr/> 61	

IN BERKELEY

No. Families per House	Total Houses	Total Families	Type of House
2	26	52	1-Family, semi-detached
4	12	48	2-Family, semi-detached
	<hr/> 38	<hr/> 100	

The number of rooms in the mill houses ranges from five to seven, though in a few dwellings there are only three rooms. In River Point there are some two-room apartments in the basements of hillside houses. For these there is a waiting list, as the rent, measured in dollars, not in value received, is low. Fifty cents a week for two good-sized rooms, one a kitchen with running water, the other a bedroom, will appeal to the "unco thrifty" and to the shiftless. While these rooms are not so very bad,—two of their walls are a full story above ground and have full-sized windows and door,—their popularity illustrates the fact that there are always people ready to take the cheapest thing they can get. The management recognizes that these rooms are not good dwellings by requiring the tenants to move if a baby is born,—a rule enforced though it may cost the mill a worker.

ATTIC ROOMS

The worst feature in the mill houses, especially the older ones, is the attic bedroom. The number of rooms per dwelling is nearly always adequate, and the downstairs rooms are large enough and well lighted. But the attic bedrooms are often too small for comfort,—one of the tenants visited was very proud of the fact that one of her attic bedrooms was large enough to hold a "full bedroom set,"—their low ceilings and slanting walls further limit the cubic air space. The two end rooms have full-sized windows, but there are often one or two other attic bedrooms which may have a fair-sized dormer set at the end of a tunnel-like extension, or a small window near the floor, or even a three-pane window set flat in the roof.

THE VILLAGE YARDS

In spite of the unlimited areas around the villages, houses are clustered as thickly as they were in Providence until the recent inten-

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

sive building began. Yet the yards are adequate, except, perhaps, in the cases of the multiple dwellings, and there it is the type of dwelling, rather than parsimony in the use of land, that is responsible.

PRIVIES

The worst feature of the yards in most of the villages is the privy. Even in Berkeley, where the privy shelter is combined with a woodshed and kept clean and well painted, it is offensive on warm summer days. In River Point one large group of privy compartments, used by the families in eleven tenements, as well as the occupants of the boarding house, are within twelve feet of the windows of four families. In Esmond only the old houses have privies. These are in cleanly condition and good repair, and are set far back from the dwellings, which is good in one way but bad in another, as it makes them more inaccessible. The new houses of Esmond have basement water-closets. These basements are light and well ventilated, but as the fixtures are set so near the level of the sewer there are frequent stoppages, due to the soil pipe lying almost horizontal.

GARBAGE

Garbage disposal constitutes another problem which the mill villages have not solved satisfactorily. The regularity and frequency of collection varies according to the management of the village, but the practice of dumping the garbage on piles near the dwellings seems to be general. In West Warwick vain efforts have been made to stop the dumping of refuse at a place where rains wash it into the Centreville-Apponaug brook. In Berkeley the garbage dump has long been worse than an eyesore—the one point in its favor being that when garbage pails become full between the visits of the garbage collector, the tenants themselves can walk the 200 feet between their dwellings and the river bank and add their contributions to the pile. The common practice of using wooden receptacles, such as butter firkins, for garbage also has its disadvantages, as the receptacles are not large enough and the wood soon becomes saturated. Since this garbage is not fed to hogs there is no reason why the water should not be drained off in the kitchen sink and the solid matter wrapped in newspaper before being put in the garbage pail. This would prevent the pails becoming saturated if wood is still used, and better, it would make possible the use of covered metal pails, as the contents would not freeze to the sides in winter. In summer the newspaper wrapping and the tight cover would keep out flies and other vermin.

MANAGEMENT

Though most of the mill managements say that the mill houses are things with which they would gladly dispense, many of them are

SOME MILL TOWNS

still building houses,—even some that are within the five-cent fare of Providence. Moreover, in recent years there has been a notable change for the better in the upkeep of many of the villages. Where hard bare-earth yards had been are now gardens; where the use of water for sprinkling was forbidden are now well-kept little lawns. In some villages, as Esmond, the management offers prizes for the best kept gardens, and though the new village is so new that it is not yet finished, already there are promising vegetable patches, and some of the houses have beautiful gardens. Another evidence of the new attitude of the mill managements is the district and the village nurse. The Pawtuxet Valley villages have a Visiting Nurse and an Anti-tuberculosis association which is seven years old. In the other valleys individual villages have nurses, like the one at Esmond, who is employed by the mill. Other organizations, like the League of Improvement Societies, are offering prizes for gardens.

CONCLUSION

Except for their attic rooms, there is nothing so seriously amiss in the mill villages that it cannot be remedied if the desire for better standards is aroused. And there is evidence that this desire is aroused. Though in some the management may seek to avoid trouble by forbidding vegetable gardens, the contents of which may appeal to others than the husbandman, and in others the management may show little interest in the appearance of its bare and forlorn houses, there are enough who take a more farsighted and public-spirited view of their responsibilities to prove that a better day is dawning. The new houses are better than the old, modern conveniences are taking the places of wells and privies, gardens are planted where only ashes and cinders were before. Surely, then, it is not too much to hope that soon the leaders will get together and work out a solution of problems beyond the ability of any to solve singly, and that the villages of the three valleys will soon have the public services that their increasing density of population and their relation to Providence make constantly more and more necessary.

XI

Summary

TYPES OF HOUSES

In the foregoing pages we have laid the chief emphasis upon the housing provided for immigrant groups and that which some of them are now providing for themselves. This is for three reasons:

First. Of all our states Rhode Island has, with possibly one or two exceptions, the largest proportion of foreign born. It therefore has the hardest task in Americanizing alien peoples. In this task it will be greatly helped or hindered by the kind of dwellings in which the immigrant peoples live, for nothing so clearly sets a group apart as a different, and especially a lower standard of living. The dwelling is the patent sign of its inhabitants' standard.

Second. Two of these immigrant groups, being builders of dwellings, are setting upon Providence the ineradicable stamp of their present standard. Those individuals who are now setting this stamp upon the city are the more ambitious and able. They and their families sooner or later will move away from the districts they are creating; but the districts will remain,—a depressing influence upon those of their blood who will continue to live there, a permanent blot upon the city. It is for Providence to say whether it will accept such housing standards as these builders and their American-born associates find acceptable because temporarily profitable to themselves, or whether it will demand standards in keeping with what it believes an American city should have.

Third. The greater number of dwellings in the city which fall below the minimums that should be permitted are built for and by the immigrant peoples and are occupied by them.

We have, however, called attention to the housing of others than the immigrant peoples. Our main purpose in this has been to point out tendencies, for, excepting the comparatively small number of derelicts, the American born live in dwellings that are sanitary and that meet most housing requirements. We have spoken of the frame three-decker, and spoken with more restraint than would otherwise have been possible were we not convinced that its course is almost run. Only under exceptional conditions does it prove profitable to its owner after the first few years. The banks and other money lenders will soon find, as have those of Massachusetts, that it is a poor investment. It is a fire menace; it is a destroyer of property values in good neighborhoods; it is a breeder of dissensions among its inhabitants; it is a constant source of annoyance to its owner; it is a disfigurement to the

SUMMARY

city. Yet having been built in such numbers, there probably will be examples left a century hence to show our great, great-grandchildren how many of us lived.

More important is the large tenement or apartment house—despite Providence definitions they are virtually the same. Just at its beginning here, the future seems to promise its multiplication. At a time when students of housing all over the world have condemned the multiple dwelling, at a time when German cities, after centuries of experience with this inheritance from decadent Rome, and New York, after generations of experience, are doing their utmost to check it and to encourage the erection of small houses, those who control the building of Providence are welcoming it. If Providence could have its experience and then easily rid itself of these barracks, their coming might be viewed with sardonic joy. But they will stay. Of all bad habits they are the most permanent. Rome has them still. Land that has been capitalized on the basis of an income derived from a dozen families cannot be deflated so that one family may bear the burden.

SANITARY CONDITIONS

Less important than the type of house, because more easily changed, are the sanitary conditions. Neglect to lay sewers at the proper time may cause present disease and future expense, but the neglect can be remedied whenever the people decide that they will endure present conditions no longer. The acceptance of cellar and yard water-closets may be a source of sickness and discomfort to those now living, but so long as dwellings are properly planned and ample open spaces are kept, indoor toilets may be installed whenever the community decides that only such conveniences comport with its sense of decency. Garbage and ashes hoarded in bins or scattered about the yards and streets may shock our clean-up committees and be an ever-ready, if indirect, means for the spread of disease, but they can be removed whenever the tax-payers are willing to pay the charges.

In this there is no attempt to minimize the evil consequences of filth in all its manifestations. Even if filth could be shown to have no connection with the death rate, even if the occasional healthy children born and reared on a garbage dump could be taken as advertisements of its salubrity, still the commonsense of the community would convince it that cleanliness is better than filthiness. Self-respect as well as a desire for comfort, in the city as in an individual, will make it wish to be clean. The point is that, however dirty a city may be, when its wish becomes strong enough it can be clean. But once a city has permitted its land to become overcrowded with buildings, once it has substituted barracks for houses, it may wish itself into bankruptcy without changing its condition.

XII

Recommendations

A HOUSING CODE

In view of the conditions described in the preceding pages the most obvious need is a thoroughgoing code that will check bad tendencies. Such a code may be either a Special Act applying only to Providence or a General Law applying to all the cities and towns of Rhode Island. In case a General Act is secured, it should contain a provision permitting any city or town to raise, but not to lower, the standards it sets. For a state law will probably be based upon the conditions existing in the worst city in the state; or it may be that Newport, Woonsocket, or some other city, if not awakened to its housing needs, will permit its influence to be used against the setting of good standards and so cause the law to be weaker than one Providence would accept.

Yet a General Act would be especially valuable in the case of Providence because the city is so closely surrounded by other growing communities that whatever advantage it might secure by the adoption of a Special Act would be materially diminished by the development, just outside its borders, of the conditions against which it is fighting. Still, if a General Act cannot be secured, a Special Act certainly should be, for an oasis is better than unrelieved desert.

A housing code may be a chapter in the building code or it may be a separate law, supplementary to the building code. In either case it should be complete in itself, containing all those provisions necessary to safeguard the health and safety of the occupants of dwellings. (The primary purpose of a building code is to safeguard property.) Inasmuch as the present Providence building code contains a few provisions dealing with housing as distinguished from building, the housing code should contain a provision repealing them so that there may be no confusion.

We shall make no attempt to outline a complete housing code, as a special committee is now drafting one, but shall merely call attention to certain points which our investigation shows merit special consideration.

1. Land Overcrowding. This is the fundamental housing evil. Once it has become widespread, only unsatisfactory compromise is possible. It has already begun in certain parts of Providence and should be stopped now. It is unusually difficult to deal with here, however, because of the irregular sizes and shapes of lots. The inadequacy of the provision in the present building code is vividly illus-

RECOMMENDATIONS

trated by the new building on a rear lot on Atwells Avenue (facing page 28). In dealing with land overcrowding the custom of staggering buildings, which permits of abundant light and air, must be kept in mind. If this method of placing buildings can be continued with adequate open spaces at the side and rear, there is no need for a space of more than ten feet between the ends of front and rear buildings.

At the same time we must bear in mind that as the city grows there will come the temptation to fill the side yards which now give the rear building its outlook to the street and make the side rooms of the front building bright and sunny. An illustration of what may be expected, unless guarded against, is given at 21 and 23 Trenton Street. Here a two-and-a-half-story dwelling occupied half the front of the lot, while a three-and-a-half-story one occupied the rear. Now a new two-story building has been erected on the unoccupied half of the front, almost completely shutting in the rear dwelling, which has access to the street only through a passage-way four feet wide. Two of these buildings, the new front one and the rear one, are much too close to the lot line, the former coming within one foot of the side line, the latter within one and a half feet of the side lines and three feet of the rear line. Needless to say, if this kind of thing becomes common the majority of living-rooms will become dark or gloomy.

2. Sanitation. Providence has done unusually well in supplying water to its dwellings. Only in the outlying areas do people still depend upon wells. The situation in Cranston, too, is satisfactory because of its arrangement with the larger city. But in East Providence the situation is not satisfactory. East Providence is ceasing to be a mere geographical expression, and becoming a community. It is time that the Watchemoket Fire District disappeared. Water mains should be extended as rapidly as possible and house connection should be required wherever mains are accessible.

In regard to sewers and toilets, neither Providence nor the surrounding communities have done their full duty. As sewers are extended, every house should be connected, and power must be given to public officials to compel such connection. Moreover, there should be less discretion permitted as to where toilets may be installed. Outdoor closets are a makeshift to be accepted only when absolutely necessary. In the Providence District we found no cases where this makeshift is necessary. Cellar water-closets are in some ways worse than those put in the yard. Yet there are many of them, though it would have been possible to put them inside the dwelling. Hall water-closets also should not be permitted when it is possible to put the closet inside the apartment, yet there are a number of these closets, dark, and ventilated, if at all, with a small vent pipe.

A permit to build a tenement house or an apartment house should not be granted unless a sewer is accessible.

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

When cesspools are abandoned it should be required that they be disinfected and filled up.

3. Fire Hazard. In a frame city like Providence the fire hazard is always considerable. This can be diminished by requiring considerable open spaces around buildings and by forbidding the erection in residence districts of factories where inflammable articles are manufactured. Where buildings are crowded closely together their walls and roofs should be of non-inflammable materials. Multiple dwellings more than three stories high should be of fireproof construction. Dwellings more than two stories high or housing more than two families should have two ways of egress as widely separated from each other as possible. Winding stairs from bedrooms or living-rooms should be prohibited in new or converted buildings. Fire-escapes are necessary on many old dwellings, but they are not satisfactory second means of egress. This should be provided in new buildings by properly constructed stairs.

Not only because they are a fire hazard, but also because they become public nuisances, deserted houses, if not kept in good condition, should be demolished.

4. Alteration. The custom of adding new stories to old dwellings and of converting barns and workshops into dwellings makes it necessary to consider very carefully the provisions on alterations. Some cities require that converted buildings shall conform in all respects to the provisions for new dwellings.

5. Garbage and Ashes. With the present method of garbage disposal there is little that a housing code can require in addition to the present regulations. When a better method has been adopted, however, it should be possible to require the use of tight, covered metal cans for garbage and cans for ashes. Then the yards of Providence may be kept clean.

6. Residence Districts. Either as a part of the housing code or as a separate act, a measure should be adopted which will protect good residence districts by making it possible for owners and residents to prevent the erection of business buildings, apartment houses, tenement houses, three-deckers or other undesirable buildings or billboards in their immediate neighborhood. Though as a general proposition a man may have a right to do as he will with his own, that right has had to be curtailed in many ways when it became evident that the exercise of it would injure others. Property owners in Providence are now restrained from doing or compelled to do things with their property. The exercise by some of them of the privilege of erecting any kind of building they wish is not only causing tremendous losses in the value of surrounding property, but is lowering the character of whole areas and making the city a less desirable place in which to live.

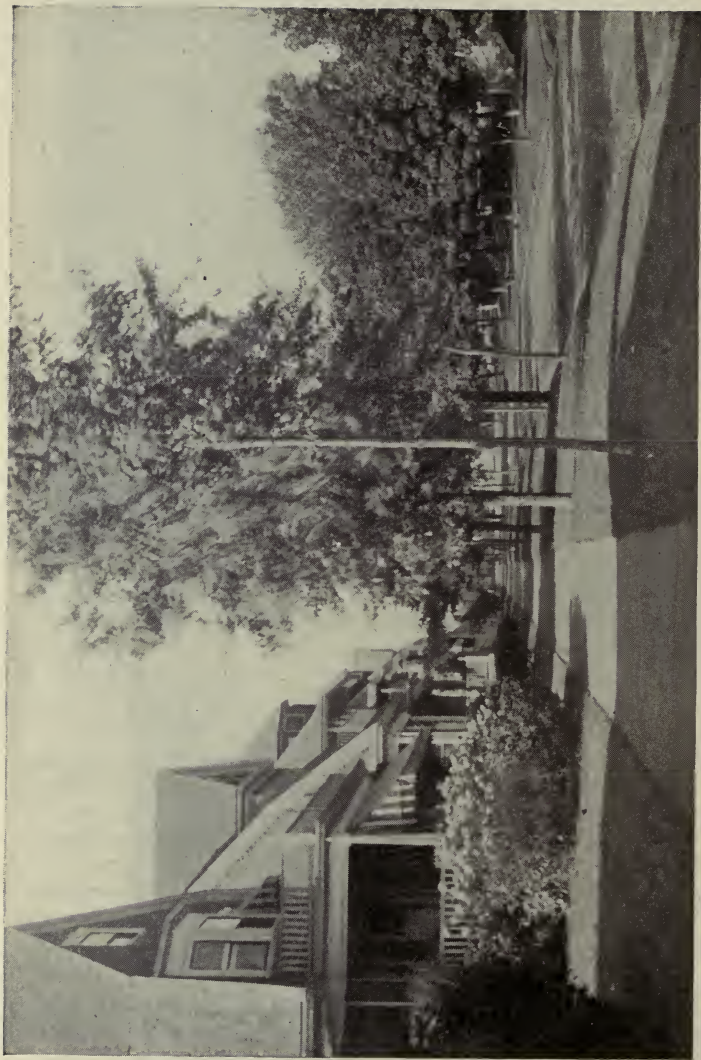
7. Basement Rooms and Hillside Dwellings. Chiefly because of the dwellings along some of its hillside streets, Providence has the beginning of the basement problem. As the city is fairly adequately



Sutton Street. Unaccepted and unsewered. Here frame three-deckers have grown to be four-deckers. Note fire-escapes on buildings. Note garbage keg in middle of picture. Its cover is not very secure. Such houses as these are creeping toward the pleasant residence streets.



Hillside houses on North Davis Street. Their basement rooms may be used as bedrooms.



An attractive Residence Street

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supplied with dwellings, these basement rooms are practically never used for sleeping. Many of them are, however, used for summer kitchens and laundries. Others are used as the stock rooms of stores which stand a full story high on the street in front. Some of these basement rooms are almost entirely above ground. Others, by the time the back wall is reached are almost entirely under ground. Our investigations were made during a season notable for its rain. Yet we found few basements or cellars wet, though we were told of sections of the city outside the inspection districts where, because of clay sub-soil, cellars are often half full of water. In any case, Providence has the beginnings of the basement problem, and the law must define just what a basement is and what a cellar is and state under what conditions a basement may be occupied for living purposes.

8. Rat Proofing. Providence is a seaport town and therefore liable to have a visitation of bubonic plague. So there is even more reason than in inland cities for requiring rat proofing.

9. One of the great troubles in enforcing present regulations is due to difficulty in finding the absentee landlord. The law should require that the owner of real estate shall file his name and address, or that of a responsible agent.

HOW CITY PLANNING MAY AID

A law setting definite standards below which no dwelling may fall is not enough to secure the building of such a city as Providence should be. Restriction must be supplemented by constructive action. Among those who can render the greatest aid is the City Plan Commission. It can study the probable growth of the city, not only for the purpose of laying out main traffic thoroughfares and deciding where reservations should be made for parks and playgrounds, but to determine the ultimate possible or permissible density of population. Upon this depends the proper distance between streets and the proper width of streets, the proper depth of lots, the proper size of water mains and sewers. Its studies would also determine the direction of streets and their grade, so an owner would not find it practically impossible, as he sometimes does now, to connect with a sewer because when the street is finally put through his house is too low. Like those of the Metropolitan Park Commission, its interests would lead it far outside of the city borders, for the problems in which it is concerned cannot be solved by Providence alone. The street system, the water system, the sewer system, must ultimately take in the whole metropolitan district, including the mill villages up the valleys.

Either the City Plan Commission or some other official body should make a study of the unaccepted streets and formulate a policy which will lead to their being speedily accepted, sewers laid and the surfaces paved. Supplementary to this, new developments should be planned so that the present situation may not be duplicated in the future.

THE HOUSES OF PROVIDENCE

HOW CITIZENS' ORGANIZATIONS MAY AID

There are in Providence a number of organizations whose work brings them into constant touch with housing, such organizations as the Society for Organizing Charity, the Visiting Nurse and the Anti-tuberculosis Association and the Immigrant Educational Bureau. They know the conditions under which the poorer people live, and can aid both by reporting violations of law and by instructing the people as to what is good and what is bad in housing, and where and how to get better dwellings. To a considerable extent they are doing this now, but it might be made a more definite part of their program. This work should lead to the establishment of a corps of what, for want of a better title, might be called visiting housekeepers. The visiting nurses have fully proved their value to the community. The visiting housekeepers would find a similar field, where ignorance and helplessness wait only for one who can teach and aid.

Providence already has a Clean Up Committee which has drawn public attention to the need for cleaner yards. This committee might extend the scope of its work. Providence yards range from those containing piles of ashes, garbage and rubbish to those containing trim vegetable patches and bright flower gardens. Experience shows that the hardest task is to make people negatively good. Also it is the one least worth while. Tomlinsons have no place in heaven or hell, nor on the good earth either. A bare yard is more wholesome than one heaped with wastes. But a vacuum is sure to be filled with something. Why not with vegetables and flowers? If the committee will make the cultivation of gardens, rather than the cleaning up of yards and vacant lots, its main purpose it will not only accomplish the other incidentally, but will create a body of informed opinion in favor of open spaces that will be of very great assistance in keeping the open spaces that now are threatened by shortsighted builders. So it will ally itself with those who would reduce the fire hazard and with those who wish to keep Providence a city in which the poorest may have their share of air and sun. Already the State League of Improvement Societies is doing good work along this line, and the Chamber of Commerce by its distribution at cost of 25,000 roses and spirea last spring has shown in a practical way the interest that business men take in the beauty of the city.

SOME STUDIES THAT MIGHT BE MADE

Providence apparently is about to turn from one type of dwelling to another. Before the new type gets firmly established would it not be profitable for a group of citizens who are interested in realty values, but whose interest is broad enough and impersonal enough to permit them to weigh future gains against present gains and the well-being of the whole community against the possibility of greater profit

RECOMMENDATIONS

for a few, to make a serious study of the permanent effects of different types of dwellings, and of different building materials? Have those who loan the money which makes the present types of dwellings possible, those who guide investors, no moral obligation to learn as definitely as they can what experience, not alone in their own city, but in others, has to teach as to the permanent results of what they are doing? Even if their clients, the present investors, come out of the investment gainers, have they not an obligation to the future city which will inherit these buildings?

And what could appeal to them as more interesting? For a man likes to think that his work is good and that so long as it endures it will win praise. So they should be interested to know whether Massachusetts, from which the three-decker is said to have come, has found it a monument of which its builder may be proud, and why. They should be interested to know whether New York and the cities of continental Europe have found the large tenement or apartment house a better investment than the small house, whether their experience leads them to favor its erection in new areas. They will find two opinions on these questions. That will add to the interest. The question is not a simple one, even from the purely investment point of view. What is the best type of dwelling, what are the best materials considering initial cost, depreciation, repairs, maintenance, taxes, insurance, steadiness of rental? They might inquire what is the smallest lot that is really economical, and who beside the first sub-divider really gains when lots go below this minimum size, who gains by land overcrowding and for how long?

Appendix

METHOD OF WORK

When we first came to Providence we talked over the local housing situation with the Committee on Housing Survey. From them we secured suggestions and the names of people whom we should consult.

The following week we spent in making a preliminary or pathfinder survey of the city and surrounding communities in order that we might get a comprehensive impression of the whole problem. Then we mapped out our work in detail and, after consultation with city officials, social workers, real-estate men and others in positions which brought them into personal contact with the varied housing conditions of the city, selected six districts for intensive study. These districts were chosen carefully in order that they might present accurate pictures of those phases most significant both of the present and the future. The advice given us in making this selection proved its worth during the succeeding months when our more intimate acquaintance with Providence made us better able to judge. In only two instances did we find it necessary to change from the original program: first, by adding a third sub-division to the district on Federal Hill; second, by including the district near Manton Avenue in order to get a Polish settlement. The districts studied were:

District 1.

A. Area included by Transit, Benefit, Pike, Link and Wickenden streets and the block on Benefit between Tockwotton and India streets. The predominant nationality here was negro Portuguese and Brava.

B. Area included by Trenton, Ives, Wickenden, East, Transit and Governor streets. Predominant nationality, white Portuguese. Some Irish and Bravas.

District 2.

A. Area included between Cedar, Sutton, Atwells, Lily, Spruce and McAvoy streets. Predominant nationality, Italian.

B. Area included between Swiss, Knight, Gesler and Ridge streets. Predominant nationality, Italian.

C. Area between Atwells, Albro, Federal and Arthur streets. Predominant nationality, Italian.

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District 3.

Area included between Chalkstone, North Davis, Douglas, Goddard, Candace and Lydia streets, then to Douglas and to Chalkstone. Predominant nationality, Jewish.

District 4.

Area included between Richmond, Elm, Parsonage, Point, Hospital, Bassett, Chestnut, Elbow, Ship, and Clifford streets. Population of several nationalities, including Americans of American ancestry.

District 5.

Area included between Social, Charles, Hawkins, Branch and Oppen streets. Predominant nationality, Italian.

District 6.

Area included between Kossuth, Bowdoin, Appleton and Julian streets, with the block along Julian to Manton Avenue. Predominant nationality, Polish. Also Irish and French-Canadian.

These districts are outlined on the accompanying maps. In these districts every house was visited, and when they were found occupied as a dwelling a schedule similar to the one reproduced on another page was made out for each. In only one instance was admission refused. The schedules are given to the committee as a part of this report in order that statements may be verified. Otherwise they are to be considered confidential. The information contained on them was drawn off on tabulation sheets which are also turned in as part of this report. The more important data was then made up in tables which appear on the preceding pages.

During the course of the investigation we consulted frequently with local people and we took two trips through the districts with several persons most intimately acquainted with local conditions, pointing out what we had found and asking for suggestions in order that we might learn of any oversights or false deductions.

The investigations were begun on May 1 and continued until August.

Street No. City Date

BUILDING

Front-Rear-Staggered-Brick-Frame STYS. No. A-Cel.-Bas. S.F.-2F.-3F.-TH.-CH. SUITES PER FL.-C.-B. 1-2-3-4-5 OUTSIDE REPAIR G.-F.-B.

NUISANCE LOCATION LOT

WIDTH How Paved KIND REPAIR G.-F.-B. IRREG. WIDTH DEPTH SEWER SPACE bet. Bldgs; Side Lot Lines AREA of Building; of Lot
CITY WATER Yes-Not Yes-Not

STREET

GARBAGE CANS Adqte.-Tight-Cover-Standard-Metal-Wood WHEN EMPTIED NUISANCE BINS-CANS Adqte.-Tight-Brick-Metal-Wood HOW FULL

YARD None-How Paved-Repair G. F. B. DRAINAGE Sewer-Surface-Adqte.-Swampy-Water RUBBISH Fr.-S.-M.-Nu. GARDEN None-Veg.-Flowers

OUT-BUILDINGS None-Frame-Brick USE Storage-Horses-Cows-Chickens-Rabbits CLEAN C.-D.-Fl.-Nu. REPAIR G.-F.-B. CESSPOOL Yes-None

STAIRS Frt-Bk-Centre-Outside-Fire Escape-Adqte. LOC. St-Yd-Ct. REPAIR G.-F.-B. OBSTRUCTED-Dangerous EGRESS FROM YARD Adqte.-Obstruc.

TOILETS LOCATION Yd.-Suite-Hall-Cellar No. per Fl. Outside Window-Gas-Elec. Kind Enclosed Door Locked No. Fam. Usg. CLEAN C.-D.-Fl. REPAIR G.-F.-B.

WATER SUPPLY Yard-Cellar-Halls-Suites KIND City-Well ADQTE. SINK Hall-Suite Enclosed-Trapped REPAIR G.-F.-B.

LOWEST FLOOR Cellar-Bas.-Air Space ht. above grnd. USE Bus-Storage-Dwel. VENT G F-B LIGHT L-Gl.-D. DAMPNESS Dry-Damp-Wet-Water

RAIN LEADER REPAIR G. F. B. Discharges where

STAIR HALLS Width-Skylt.-Window-L-Gl.-D. Gas-Elec. Winders

INSIDE REPAIR

RENTS G. F. B. No. of Rooms Amt

SKETCH—Lot—House

No. Rms. having too small windows only

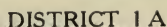
No. Rms. with window to inadqt. space only

No. Rms. having window to rm. hall, etc. only

No. Rms. having window to shaft only

C. B. 1 2 3 4 5 W. C-Corn. Hillside Hon.

THE SCHEDULE USED IN THE SIX INSPECTION DISTRICTS.







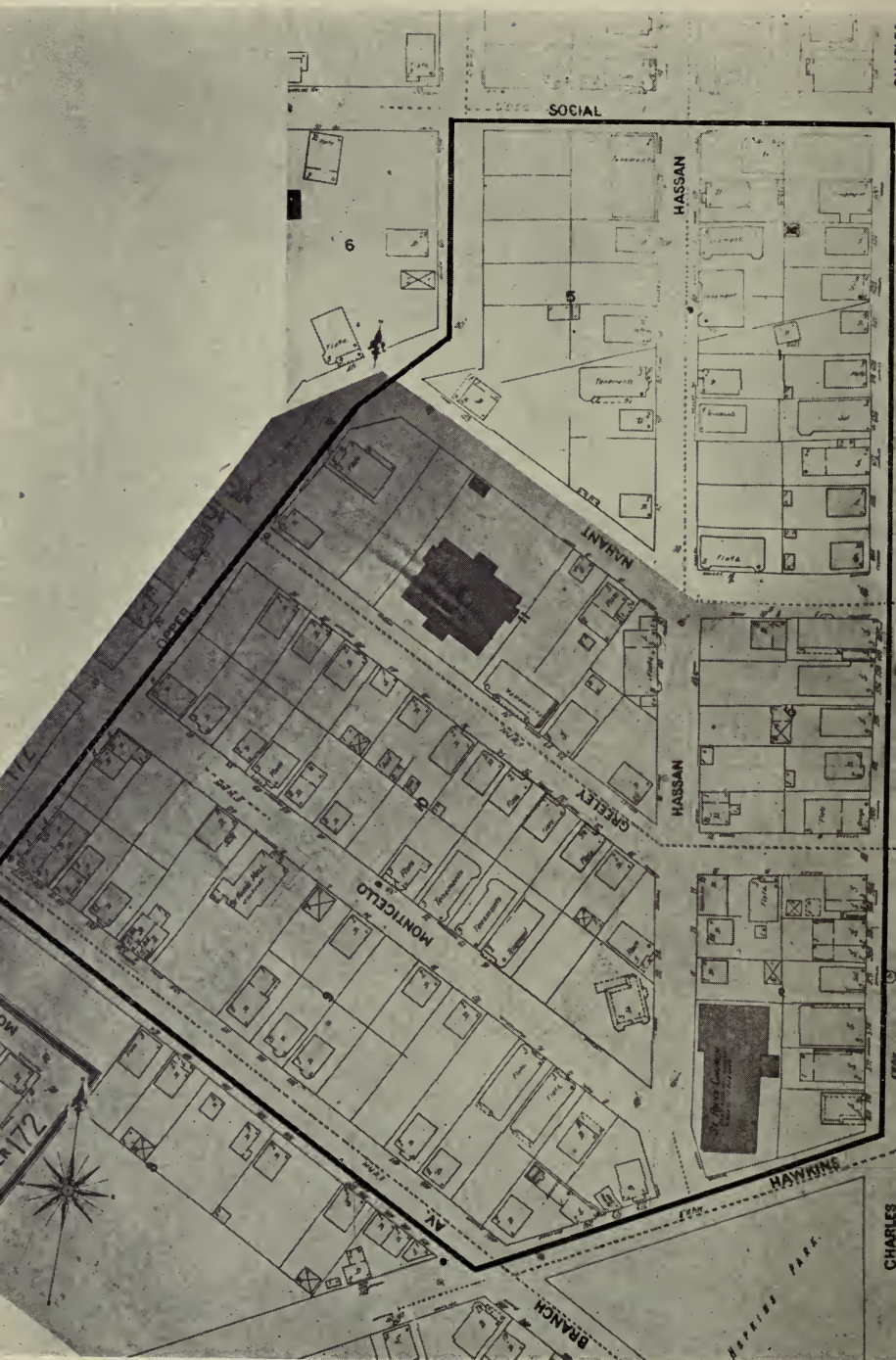
DISTRICT 2 A



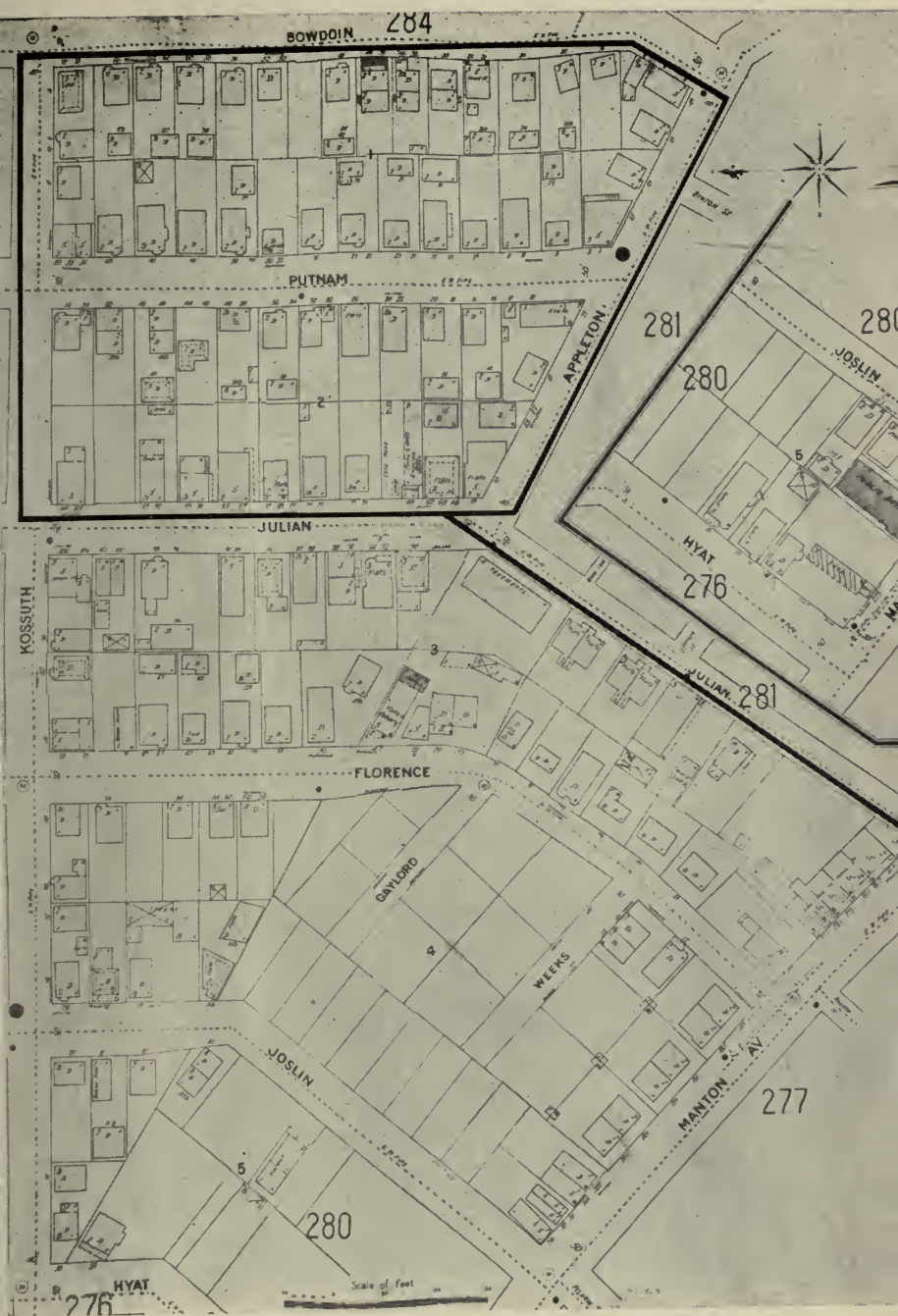








DISTRICT 5



DISTRICT 6

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